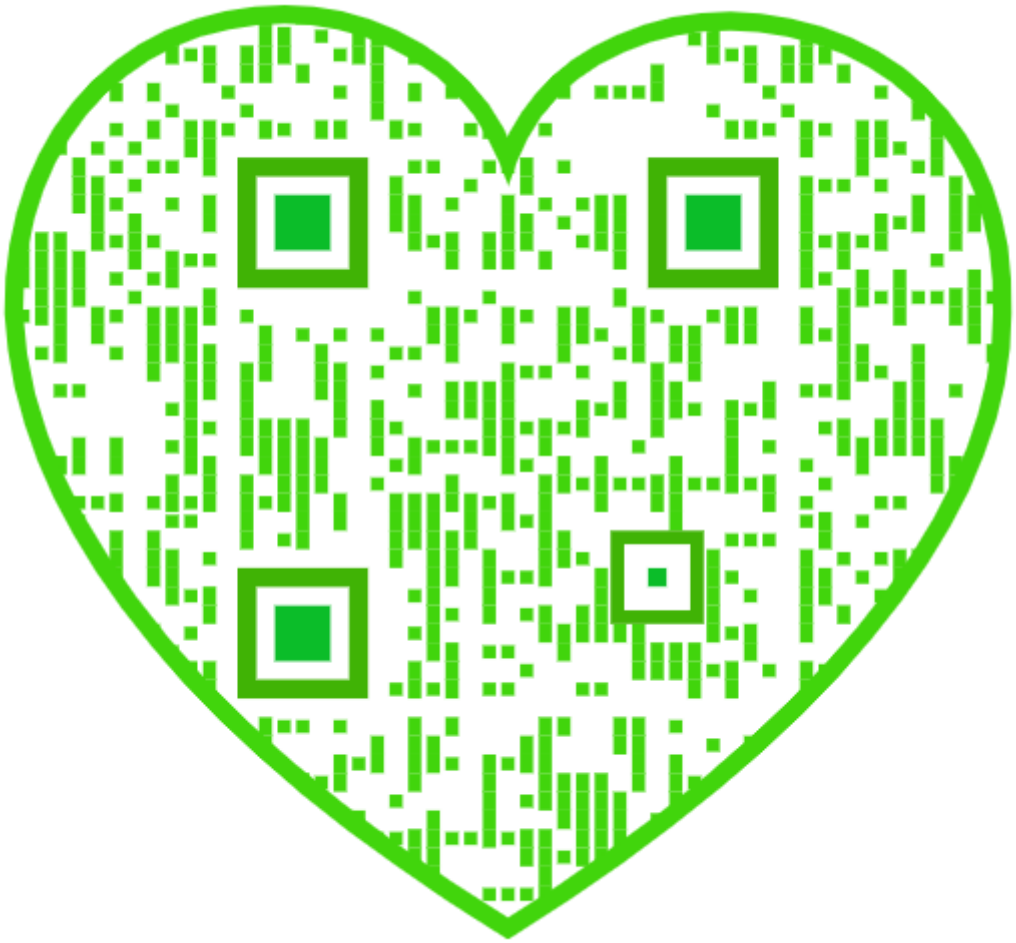

FISHING WITH FLOATING FLIES

FISHING WITH FLOATING FLIES

BY

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CHAPTER I

The Matter of Equipment

NO man knows, or ever will know, the art of fly-fishing in its entirety, and the present writer is far from claiming omniscience in the matter. Wherefore the fact may well be emphasized that the following pages are not intended for the expert—the seasoned angler skilled in wet, dry, and mid-water fly-fishing—but, rather, for the beginner at the sport of fishing with floating flies and for the novice who may take up fly-fishing with the purpose of ultimately employing the dry fly. At the outset, before going into the details of the dry fly caster's equipment and methods, it would seem necessary to outline certain general phases of the subject with special reference to the enlightenment of the veritable beginner at dry or wet fly fishing, and also with regard to the present status of the sport of dry fly casting practiced upon American waters.

American dry fly fishing may be defined briefly as the art of displaying to the trout a single artificial fly floating upon the surface of the stream in the exact manner of the natural insect. Upon occasions, somewhat rare, indeed, but nevertheless of sufficient frequency to render the fact noteworthy, the American dry fly man casts consciously to a rising and feeding trout—the invariable custom of the English dry fly "purist." On the trout streams of this country, however, the orthodox manner of fishing the floating fly is to fish all the water as when wet fly casting.

In America, owing to the fact that the dry fly angler fishes the water and not the rise, wet and dry fly fishing are far more closely related than is the case in England where the orthodox sportsman stalks the trout, casting exclusively to a rising and feeding fish; from this it may be easily deduced that much of the following discussion on the subject of fishing with floating flies is—in the very nature of things must be—equally applicable to either dry or wet fly fishing.

Moreover, angling conditions are such in this country that the fly-fisherman to be consistently successful cannot rely solely upon either one method or the other—he should be pass-

ably expert with either the dry or the wet fly, employing one or the other as conditions warrant or the occasion renders imperative. Dry fly fishing conditions here and in England are quite dissimilar. The English dry fly specialist follows his sport, in general, upon the gin-clear, quiet chalk streams; slow, placid rivers, preserved waters artificially stocked with brown trout (*Salmo fario*), and hard-fished by the owners or lessees.

The open season is a long one, extending, taking an average, from early in the spring, about the first of March, to the first of October; and as a consequence of the steady and hard fishing the trout naturally become very shy and sophisticated. Owing to the placidity of the streams the rise of a trout is not difficult to detect, and it seems to pay best to cast to a single trout actually known to be on the rise and feeding rather than to fish all the water on the principle of chuck-and-chance-it.

On the other hand, the American fly-caster largely enjoys his sport upon the trout streams of the woods or wilderness; erratic rivers with current alternating between swift and slow, broken water and smooth, rapid and waterfall, deep pool and shallow riffle. While insect life is not, of course, absent, one can actually fol-

low such a stream for days without observing the rise of a feeding trout, although, as noted above, sometimes a rising fish will, of course, be seen; but seldom will a sufficient number be observed to warrant the angler's relying exclusively upon casting to the rise.

That, indeed, upon the average trout stream of this country, the well-chosen and cleverly cast floating fly has its place has been amply proved by the experience of many anglers. Upon the typical wilderness trout stream, where the fish are both very abundant and totally uneducated, dry fly fishing would be in the nature of a farce—although doubtless successful in view of the fact that the wild trout of such a stream will rise to almost anything chucked almost anyhow. But the average American trout stream may now be classed as a civilized stream, and it is upon such waters that the dry fly has proved its worth by succeeding time and again, under certain conditions, when the wet fly has failed.

The conditions under which the balance of probable success is on the side of the dry fly and against the wet will be more particularly detailed in succeeding chapters; in general, it may be said that the angler who fishes largely upon hard-fished public streams—and that

means the great majority of fly-fishermen—where much whipping and wading of the stream by all sorts and conditions of fishermen, good, bad, and indifferent, have rendered the trout wise in their generation, cannot well afford to overlook the possibilities of the floating fly. In such streams the trout only upon rare occasions are afforded the opportunity of seeing a single artificial fly, singularly lifelike in appearance, cocked and floating in a natural way upon the surface—and they will rise to such a fly, if cleverly placed on the water in such a manner as not to arouse suspicion, when a drag of two or more wet flies would only serve to set them down still more obstinately.

Parenthetically, in this connection, in view of the fact that fishing with the dry fly is beyond doubt a very successful method of taking trout when or where other methods may have failed, it should be obvious—to put the matter on a strictly practical basis—that the assumption of an "holier than thou" relation by the dry fly enthusiast toward his brother of the wet fly, on the ground that dry fly fishing is more sportsmanlike, is, to say the least, somewhat illogical. Surely there is little virtue in the resort to and employment of an angling method of proved deadliness under conditions which at the time

render the sunken fly harmless—however, we are not here concerned with the ethics of the matter.

But dry fly casting does, indeed, call for a high degree of skill on the part of the angler, both in casting and fishing the fly; additionally, it is imperative that one should be familiar with the best there is in fishing tackle and know much about the habits of the trout and of stream-life in general. In a word, the customary rough-and-ready equipment of the average desultory fly-caster will not do—nor will the ordinary unrefined and casual methods of the average wet fly fisherman.

To succeed with the dry fly, the wet fly fisherman of average skill must study to become still more proficient; the veritable novice at fly fishing for trout should, it would seem, first become fairly adept with the wet fly before going on to the finer-drawn art of dry fly casting. Therefore successful dry fly fishing, as done in America, is predicated upon a thorough knowledge of the craft of the wet fly fisher.

The beginner at fly-fishing must strive to become a first-rate fly-caster—to cast a light and accurate fly, not necessarily a long line. He must study fishing tackle in order to know the tools best suited to the sport under normal con-

ditions, and also under the conditions as he finds them. He must familiarize himself by much actual stream experience with the habits of the trout—learn to read a trout stream as another man might read a book. Moreover, he should cultivate the power of observation and apply it constantly to stream-life in general and the insect life of the stream in particular.

The correct fundamental theory of fly-fishing for trout, with either wet or dry flies, consists in the closest possible simulation, by means of an artificial fly, of the form, coloration, and action of some natural insect then upon the water and upon which the trout are feeding. In England this theory has always been very closely followed by expert fly-fishermen, although over there, as in this country, various fancy flies—not dressed to counterfeit any certain natural fly—have long been in successful use. In England it is the custom of many good fly-fishers who are also skillful fly-tiers, to take with them to the stream a small kit of fly dressing materials and to tie at the stream-side correct imitations of the natural flies then upon the water.

The American fly-fisherman, speaking of the class generally, has never followed the theory of exact imitation of nature in the selection of

his trout flies. The larger part of our so-called American trout fly patterns are actually of English origin, and were introduced to the waters of this country through the medium of our first professional fly-tiers, Englishmen and Scotchmen, who, as a matter of course, after coming to this country, continued to dress the patterns with which they were familiar. A certain few of our most famous artificial flies are, indeed, of American invention—flies such as the Seth Green, Reuben Wood, Parmachenee Belle, Imbrie, Barrington, and a few others. Other patterns, so familiar to the fly-fishermen of this country that the fact that they are not of American origin seems very strange, are the coachman, grizzly king, Montreal (Canadian), Cahill, governor, cowdung, silver doctor, Beaverkill—in fact, nearly all of our most killing and widely known patterns.

Regarding the Beaverkill, the name of which is so suggestively American to one at all familiar with the trout streams of the East, it might be well to amplify to some extent, as I am sure many anglers would otherwise take exception to the statement that this fly is of English origin. In "Familiar Flies," by Mary Orvis Marbury—an invaluable book for the fly-fisherman—it is related that an American angler,

fishing one day with a cast of three English flies, had particularly good luck with a certain one of the three, and subsequently had the pattern copied by the famous old-time fly-tier, Harry Pritchard. At that time the fly was christened the Beaverkill, it being evident, from the facts as stated, that the English name of the pattern was unknown to the parties.

From the story as told in "Familiar Flies" it may be gathered that even the persons who introduced the "Beaverkill" to American waters in time lost sight of the fact that the fly was originally dressed after an imported model. Personally, I am sure that the Beaverkill is none other than the "silver sedge," a well-known English pattern used frequently in both wet and dry fly fishing, and I am certain that anyone who will take the trouble to compare the two flies side by side will quite agree with me.

As to the basic principle of trout fly-fishing, that of approximating with the utmost fidelity, in the dressing and manipulation of the artificial fly, the shade, shape, and movement of the natural fly, various "schools" have arisen from time to time in advocacy of the greater importance of coloration as compared to size and shape (within reasonable limits, of course), or,

again, of the action imparted to the artificial fly as compared with its coloration, size, or form. Into matters of this sort it is needless to enter here. The practical, common-sense point of view would seem to be that neither the proper color nor the correct imitative action of the artificial fly can safely be disregarded by the angler; moreover, the size and the shape of the artificial, varied to suit the occasion, are factors of great importance. By the skilful employment of the modern tackle and methods of the dry fly caster the angler approaches very closely to the ideal principle of his craft—exact imitation of nature.

Recalling a foregoing statement to the effect that the American fly-caster, in general, has not to any serious extent followed the theory of exact imitation of nature; moreover, in view of the fact that practically no artificial flies are to be had dressed in imitation of the native insects common to our trout waters, it should be obvious that the dry fly caster must continue to rely upon artificials of English pattern or manufacture. It is a fact, however, that it is possible, provided your fly book is passably well filled with various patterns, to approximate very closely the appearance of many of the natural insects you will see upon the water.

Furthermore, in view of this state of affairs, it would seem best to avoid at this time any lengthy reference to the entomology of the trout stream, as leading only to confusion worse confounded—there is an instant and imperative need of an authoritative American fly-fishing entomology and of a fairly comprehensive series of artificial flies, dry and wet, dressed in imitation of the native insects common to our streams and upon which our trout are known to feed; until these are available we must adapt the means at hand to the end desired. In this connection, however, it should be noted that it is not strictly necessary for success that the angler at all times use an exact copy of a natural fly—witness the wide employment of various fancy patterns both here and abroad, and the further fact that our native trout are still fortunately rather less discriminating in the matter of rising to the artificial fly than the brown trout of England.

The selection of the proper tackle for dry fly fishing is obviously dependent upon a thorough knowledge of the manner in which it is to be used. Possibly it is unnecessary to say that the dry fly caster invariably works upstream, casting, preferably, upstream and slightly across the current, and that between

casts it is generally necessary to dry the fly by several false casts, that is, without allowing the fly to touch the water. To the fly-fisherman of any experience it should be very plain that a first-class fly-rod and a skilled wrist are somewhat essential. Moreover, the dry fly man works largely, although not exclusively, on the still pools and quiet reaches, where only the best of tackle, handled with a more than moderate degree of skill and care, can produce consistent results.

Furthermore, no little skill must be exercised by the angler in order properly to manipulate, or fish, the single "floater" when the cast has been made and the fly is upon the water, it must be allowed to float naturally downstream in the manner of the natural fly under like circumstances. All of which sounds perhaps not so very difficult, but, in practice, the operation really has complications of which the tyro little dreams. It is true that a dry fly possesses a certain degree of buoyancy, but if bunglingly cast and subsequently awkwardly manipulated, the fly is soon "drowned," drawn under water by the weight of a carelessly slack line or from some other cause really, as a rule, preventable by the careful and skilled rod-handler.

Indeed, the difficulties of clean-cut dry fly-casting are such that even an expert caster can do little with a poor equipment; the beginner, therefore, should be extremely careful in the selection of his tackle. The disappointments and difficulties of the game are quite numerous enough without starting in with the very serious handicap of a poorly adapted outfit.

CHAPTER II

The Fly Rod

IT would seem that the tentative dry fly caster cannot too carefully consider the details of the rod which he will use in the pursuit of the sport. The majority of anglers cannot well afford a battery of fly-rods; moreover, there is no market for used fishing rods, as in the case of firearms, so that if the rod proves unsatisfactory it cannot be got rid of unless one practically gives it away. It is claimed that, in time, an angler will "grow to" any sort of rod, regardless of its unfitness to him personally or of inherent faultiness in some respect; possibly this is true. Patience is, indeed, a virtue possessed by many good fishermen, but, in this instance, it is safe to say that not one fly-caster in twenty can bring himself to the continued use of a rod from which he derives no pleasure and which actually handicaps him on the stream.

The demands of dry fly casting on the rod are exacting in the extreme. On a river where there is much dry fly water probably the rod

does double the amount of work required of the wet fly rod; the need of continually drying the fly by false casting keeps the rod in almost constant action. If the rod is unsuitable in length, balance, or in some other detail of construction, this continual whipping in casting and drying the fly is anything but enjoyable. If the rod is really poorly constructed, of poor material, and thrown together rather than painstakingly fitted, a few hours of dry fly work will surely bring about its relegation to the scrap-heap—where, indeed, it belonged in the first place.

The selection of the rod for dry fly work, then, should be made with deliberation and based upon the best information obtainable. In this connection it may be noted that it is the fashion with a certain class of sportsmen to consider the purchase of a fly-rod which, relatively, may be termed an expensive one, simply a foolish waste of money and entirely a matter of "pretense and affectation." Usually this opinion is wholly the result of misinformation and lack of experience. No angler who ever had the pleasure of a day's fishing with a first-class fly-rod—provided, initially, he possessed sufficient skill and experience to thoroughly appreciate the revelation, for the action of such a

rod is, indeed, a revelation to one accustomed to the use of an inferior article—ever willingly returned to the use of the makeshift rod with which perhaps he had theretofore been contented.

The purchaser of a shotgun is usually aware of the fact that beyond a certain limit, varying with guns by different makers, he is paying for finish pure and simple—not for practical shooting efficiency in the weapon. But in the case of the fly-rod this is not true—with due deference to the opinion of the man who holds otherwise, simply, I am sure, because he has yet to cast a fly with a genuine fly-rod. All this, of course, within reason; it should be manifest that a merely "highly ornate" rod spells increased cost without return in practical casting and fishing value. However, the gingerbread fly-rod is so rare that it may safely be disregarded as a factor in the present discussion—also, parenthetically, as a factor in the day's score on the trout stream.

Reducing the matter to the practical dollars-and-cents basis, it may be said in all truthfulness that up to thirty dollars, taking an average of fly-rods by different makers, every additional dollar spent on the rod inevitably means a commensurate increase in the rod's efficiency, serv-

iceability, and all-round desirability. But while no experienced fly-caster would, I believe, take exception to the above, it still remains to be said that if economy is, indeed, an object—and that it is may usually be taken for granted—a very good rod, quite satisfactory in action, hang, and general construction, may be obtained for half the above amount plus some little discretion in its purchase. Wherefore, for the benefit of the sportsman who is willing to grant that only the best of tools are suited to the purpose of the fly-caster, and particularly to the work of the dry fly man, but who, nevertheless, wishes to obtain his outfit with the least expenditure commensurate with real efficiency in the equipment, it would seem desirable to describe briefly the characteristics of a first-class fly-rod.

To the question, Exactly what constitutes a really efficient and satisfactory rod for dry fly-fishing? ninety-nine out of one hundred expert and experienced fly-fishermen—men who have been through the mill, and so far as the rod is concerned, passed the experimental stage of the game—would, I believe, answer at once, with the utmost confidence, practically as follows: A rod constructed by hand, by an experienced rod-maker, of thoroughly seasoned and

carefully-selected split-bamboo, in six strips; in length suited to the character of the water and the fishing upon and for which it will be used, having good balance (not heavy in or out of hand), strength, adequate casting power together with a pleasant and resilient action, a speedy not a slow rod, not too pliant nor too stiff, and, finally, beyond reproach in the matter of guides, windings, handgrasp material, ferrules, and so on.

The sportsman familiar with the diversity of fishing-rod materials will at once note the implied elimination of rods constructed of the various solid woods, such as bethabara, greenheart, lancewood, dagama, and others, as well as of split-cane rods of other than six-strip construction, such as the eight-strip, steel-centered, double-built, and so on. It is not my purpose to consider at length historically, theoretically, or practically, the matter of fishing-rod materials as compared one with the other—matters quite fully discussed in my volume on "Fishing Kits and Equipment." Rather it seems best to state once and for all that past experience has proved and present use serves only to emphasize the fact that there is no better fly-rod, all things considered, for the trout fly-fisherman than the one of six strips of cane, rent from

the whole cane, carefully fashioned by hand and assembled with skill.

Of the solid wood fly-rods it is generally believed that bethabara (washaba, "noibwood") is the best. My own experience with this material has been such that I cannot discuss it with any great enthusiasm. Greenheart is largely used in England for all sorts of fishing-rods, but over there, also, the split-cane rod is conceded first place for the trout fly-rod, and is constantly increasing in use.

Parenthetically, the present trend of English anglers is toward the use of shorter and lighter rods of the American style, the two-handed fourteen-foot affair for trout fly-fishing being little in evidence; in fact, one of our most reputable firms of rod-makers annually sends a considerable number of fly-rods to England. But the split-cane fly-rods of the English makers and anglers are still much stiffer and heavier, length for length, than those favored in this country. For instance, a split-cane fly-rod constructed by a very famous firm of rod-makers according to the directions of Mr. F. M. Halford, whose angling books and articles, largely on dry fly-fishing, are absolutely authoritative as well as most readable, sensible, and genuinely informative for the American as well as

the English fly-fisherman, is nine and a half feet in length with a weight of nine and a half ounces. An American split-bamboo fly-rod of this length would not, at the utmost, weigh over six ounces. Moreover, this proportion of weight to length—except in rods called "feather-weights"—is maintained throughout the general run of English split-cane fly-rods in common use.

The American fly-caster for trout need not concern himself other than theoretically, as a matter of general angling information, with octagonal, double-built, or steel-centered split-cane rods. Eight-strip rods are commonly produced in this country—at a considerably higher figure than the rod of six strips—but it is generally and wholly agreed among those who know that there is nothing to recommend the octagonal over the hexagonal rod. The double-built rod—a rod in which each triangular strip of cane, as finally ready for completing the rod, is composed of two strips cemented together, superimposed, thus having two thicknesses of the hard outer enamel—is undoubtedly desirable where great strength is imperative, but hardly requisite for the trout fly-rod. Practically the same may be said of the steel-centered rod. Double-built rods are not made

in this country. Only one firm of rod-makers produces a steel-centered rod.

To the experienced fly-fisherman the impossibility of such a thing as an "all-round" fly-rod is constantly more apparent. No one rod can, in the very nature of things, prove thoroughly adapted to the variety of trout streams whipped by the angler even within a restricted territory. Angling conditions vary considerably with each stream; upon one water a rod of four ounces, or even less, eight feet in length is exactly the thing; for another stream the wise angler would rightly select a ten-foot rod of six ounces or thereabouts.

In view of this it is scarcely possible for one to recommend any particular length or weight of rod as being the most satisfactory and efficient. For small trout in small streams only the lightest tackle should be used for fly-fishing, either wet or dry. But, particularly with reference to casting the dry fly, it may be said that a fly-rod of from nine and a half to ten feet is the most desirable for streams of average size. While it is seldom necessary for the dry fly caster to cast any great distance, it is only in the longer rods that really good casting power can be obtained; and casting power, in view of the preferable use of a somewhat heavy tapered

line and the constantly repeated process of drying the fly, is very necessary.

The ten-foot fly-rod, other things being equal, is probably the most efficient tool for the dry fly fisherman. However, a nine-and-a-half-foot rod is a sweeter rod to handle, is suited to a greater diversity of trout waters, and, granting good material and action, is sufficiently powerful for average work—the foregoing, by the way, with the understanding that increased length spells increased capacity for handling the line, which certainly does not follow unless the rods are built on the same proportional dimensions and in proportionate weights. The five-ounce rod of the tournament fly-caster is a very different matter from the five-ounce rod of the average practical stream fisherman.

The rod for dry fly casting must not be too light in the butt; otherwise the rod will lack line-driving power; the tip, also, must not be too light and pliant, or it will result in the practical impossibility of lifting the heavy tapered line quickly and neatly from the water when a fair length of line is out. However, while a strong, speedy, and resilient rod is manifestly indicated, its action must not be too harsh—if possible the golden mean should be the final

choice. The fly-caster should never lose sight of the fact that fly-casting, pure and simple, is by no means all of fly-fishing—that in the selection of the fly-rod its suitability to striking, playing, and landing a trout must receive careful consideration.

Fly-rods which answer all too strongly to the quick impulse of the angler's wrist when striking a rising fish are by no means rare. Bearing in mind the small flies and delicate leaders necessarily used in dry fly fishing, the result of striking too strenuously can easily be imagined, but the fault cannot be corrected if the use of a rod too stiff and harsh in action is persisted in. Moreover, during the process of playing a trout, it is essential that the rod give and take with the movements of the fish, exerting an even but not too decided strain. A stiff rod is a very risky one with which to play a fish; there is great danger of the unconscious employment of too much force; a trout even poorly hooked may usually be safely landed if delicately handled, but a fish quite firmly fastened can easily be lost if forced by the angler. A rod possessing just the correct degree of elasticity and resiliency may often offset errors of judgment on the part of the angler while playing a fish, but a rod of incorrect action can

never be other than a handicap no matter how skilfully it may be handled.

In the selection of the dry fly-rod it is well, however, while avoiding the really stiff rod, to favor one with an adequate degree of "backbone" —in other words, steer very clear of the whippy rod. For dry fly casting no line is the equal of the double-tapered silk line, enameled or vacuum-dressed, and a rather heavier article than the ordinary level line chosen for wet fly fishing should be used. The rod must have sufficient casting power to handle a line of this sort. The line generally employed is size E. The matter of the mutual adaptability of line and rod will be treated later; it can, however, be noted here that only a rod tending to stiffness rather than whippiness is capable of rightly handling the line designated.

I have elsewhere ("Fishing Kits and Equipment," pages 48-50) described the manner of testing a fly-rod with a view to ascertaining its possession or lack of the various qualities and characteristics outlined above. Therefore it seems best not to rehearse the matter here, but, in this connection and as a final word on the question of the desirable fly-rod qualities from the viewpoint of general utility and practical

serviceability in dry fly casting, to simply suggest that you accept no rod, by no matter what maker, without first putting it to every possible test. I have endeavored to make it plain that a first-class rod is the result of first-class labor and material, and that it must possess a degree of excellence not found in the common run of fishing rods. The obvious corollary is that any sort of rod passed over the counter to you should not be duly and dutifully accepted on anyone's mere say-so.

Regarding the practical details of the rod, apart from the general matters already discussed, and recalling the recommendation of six-strip construction, it would seem that much stream usage and experimentation in the tackle shop and on the casting platform have resulted in the standardization of several forms of fly-rod fittings as being best adapted to the purpose in hand and producing the utmost efficiency in the rod. In the matter of ferrules, only those of German silver should be considered. Also they should be capped, welted, split or serrated, and waterproofed. Furthermore, it is perhaps unnecessary to suggest the elimination of the "patent lock-fast joint"—the omission being based upon the fact that American rod-makers, knowing the efficiency

and safety of the plain suction ferrules with which their rods are fitted, employ no other sort.

German silver is also the best material for the reel-seat. It should perhaps be noted that "German silver" is a substance varying considerably in strength, appearance, and merit as applied to use on the fly-rod; the best ferrules and reel-seats of this material are hand wrought and drawn to almost steel-like hardness. The writer would not advise a "skeleton" reel-seat for use on any fly-rod for fishing either wet or dry.

It is generally conceded by experienced fly-casters and rod-makers that the very best hand-grasp for the fly-rod is of solid cork, formed by closely fitting a number of thick cork rings over a wooden core. Cheap rods have hand-grasps of thin cork sheathing glued over a form of wood—about the most unsatisfactory of all handgrasps.

Steel guides, of the snake pattern, are preferable to those of German silver; in time the friction of the line wears deep grooves in the latter. While not imperative it is, nevertheless, a good plan to have the rod fitted with agate first and tip guides, thereby eliminating much line-wear and friction, which occurs prin-

cipally at these points, increasing quite appreciably the casting power of the rod.

The rod should be plainly wound at intervals varying from not more than an inch at the butt to a quarter-inch at the tip. Experimentation in the matter of rod-windings has never resulted in anything definitely better than the ordinary plain silk winding carefully done and well-protected with varnish.

CHAPTER III

The Reel, Line and Flies

AS IN the case of fly-rods and fly-rod materials, a complete, comparative study of fishing reels is not here purposed. It is hoped that the reader will accept as true the following statements and suggestions regarding the reel and its selection—and this applies equally to the other articles of equipment mentioned in this chapter—without the necessity of much argument pro and con or the presentation of many reasons in every instance. In fact, the general matter of fly tackle is one which has been very thoroughly threshed out in other books, and, as regards dry-fly fishing, differs only in degree, not in essentials. It is the intent of the present chapter merely to take up the subject of fly-tackle aside from the rod to an extent which will enable the beginner to start right, at any rate, without the necessity of reference to other volumes or sources of information.

The single-action click reel has for many years

been recognized by experienced fly-fishermen as the only reel suited to the purpose. In general, multiplying reels, whether double or quadruple, are entirely unsuited to use on the fly-rod. The rapid retrieve of the multiplier is of no advantage—rather the opposite—to the fly-fishermen for trout. Line fouling occurs constantly over the projecting handle of the multiplying reel; moreover, as a general thing, multiplying reels are too heavy for the purpose and balance the rod poorly. Reels of the automatic persuasion have not received the unstinted approbation of anglers.

Granting that the single-action reel is exclusively the one with which we need here concern ourselves, it does not follow that there is little choice in the selection of the reel. On the contrary, single-action reels are made of rather numerous materials and certainly in varying degrees of desirability. For use on the trout fly-rod a reel of solid metal, capable of holding thirty or forty yards of double-tapered line, size E, is apt to be too heavy, although this may possibly be a personal prejudice of the writer. Aluminum reels are, of course, light, but reels of this material are easily damaged and put out of commission—usually at a very critical time. The last statement applies also

to reels of hard rubber without metal protection.

Possibly it is more or less a personal matter, but the writer has always favored in single-action click reels of the ordinary construction the reel of hard rubber with metal bands around the edges of the side plates. These bands are either of nickeled brass or German silver, the latter naturally being the more expensive. The band on the handle side of the reel projects over the edge so as to form a protection against line fouling, and the reel handle revolves within this protecting band.

The reels commonly used in England and also easily procurable in this country are of the "revolving-disc" style—a very efficient and satisfactory form of reel; perhaps, all things considered, the best. In the revolving disc reel the handle is attached directly to the side plate, which itself revolves and is affixed to the spool or spindle.

The reel selected should be as light as possible, but strong and capable of holding at least thirty yards of double-tapered line of size E. The spool should be narrow; that is, the space between the side plates contracted, so that the line may build up quickly when reeling in. The click, or "check," should not be too

stiff. On the other hand, if it is weak and unreliable, over-runs and back lashes will occur constantly.

Regarding the size, it should be noted that the sizes designated in yards assigned to various reels by the tackle dealers are based upon the reel's capacity for holding very small caliber line. If the reel is to hold without crowding thirty yards of size E double-tapered line the side plates must have a diameter of about two and three-quarters to three inches, depending upon the make and style of the reel.

The subject of the fly-casting line is worthy of far more extended treatment than it can possibly receive here—it is doubtful if there is any more interesting or vital question to the fly-fisherman. Generally speaking, with the right line all things are possible; but an unsuitable line is capable of defeating the efforts of the most expert fly-caster. In the selection of the line there are two principal points to be considered: The line must be of the right material, and its weight or caliber must be suited to the rod upon which it will be used.

Lines for fly-casting are usually known as "waterproof, enameled silk lines." This description hardly fits the vacuum-dressed line, of which I shall speak in a later paragraph, but

the term may be used as generally defining the very best line for the purpose of the fly-caster with either wet or floating flies. In order to cast well the line must possess weight; at the same time it must be flexible without flimsiness, and smooth. These requirements are fully answered by the enameled line, and by no other.

At the present time it is generally believed by experienced anglers that the soft-enameled, vacuum-dressed line of English manufacture is the superior of all lines for dry fly casting and fishing. Lines of this character are repeatedly filled with pure, boiled linseed oil under the exhausted receiver of an air pump, being dried out after each filling in an oven heated to 150 degrees Fahrenheit, and subsequently dressed down by hand. The ordinary "enameled" line is dressed only superficially. Manifestly the vacuum-dressed line is the more serviceable; and the combination of weight, flexibility, smoothness, and perfect action in casting found in this line is difficult to surpass. The vacuum-dressed line is necessarily somewhat expensive, and the angler who does not care to invest too heavily in what may possibly be merely an experimental outfit will find the ordinary enameled or varnished line, in the

best quality, quite satisfactory and fairly serviceable.

The length and caliber of the line should be determined by the character of the fishing—always bearing in mind the fact that the line must of necessity be suited to the rod, a matter wherein the beginner is prone to go wrong and concerning which he is apt to receive some very bad advice from the man who angles chiefly in streams of printer's ink. From the time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary the "gossamer line" of the trout fly-fisherman has been a favorite topic of the producer of the "speckled-beauty" style of literature—the practical fly-fisherman knows that there is nothing more absolutely futile than the attempt to cast a line which in effect is without weight.

Very little thought will convince the reader that only a line which indeed has weight will carry well through the air when cast, and that a very small caliber line simply will not do. I shall not trouble to enlarge upon the matter. Concisely, for the average fly-rod of nine to ten feet the line should be of size F or E, the latter for the nine and a half or ten-foot rod. For the rod somewhat above the average in weight, length or casting power size D may

perhaps be best suited. Unless, however, the line is thoroughly adapted in weight to the rod upon which it is used, satisfactory casting will be quite impossible.

In the matter of suiting the line to the rod, remember that a line which is too light will fail to bring out the action of the rod and cannot successfully be employed. On the other hand, if the line is too heavy, the overburdened rod cannot lift it quickly and neatly from the water; if the angler wishes to make a somewhat longer cast than usual he may smash his rod in the endeavor to perform the impossible. The casting power of a rod is not determined purely by its weight or length; wherefore, if the opportunity offers, it is well to fit the line to the rod by practical experiment.

That a tapered line is most efficient and satisfactory for dry-fly casting is generally conceded. By the employment of a line of this character, the line being gradually fined down toward the ends, the caster has all the advantage of a heavy line in casting, while at the same time the line may be cast delicately and lightly. Also a tapered line, exactly suited to the rod upon which it is used, may be cast farther and more accurately than a level line. The majority of American fly-casters undoubt-

edly fish downstream and use the level line; when dry fly-fishing, however, it is imperative that the angler fish or cast upstream and by all odds the better plan to employ the tapered line.

For ordinary work select a double-tapered line, both ends graduated, of thirty yards' length. The length of the taper varies from fifteen (occasionally less) to eighteen feet. As to the proper length of taper, that again, other things being equal, depends somewhat upon the nature of the fishing for which the line will be used. If rather short casts are to be a rule, a short taper will work best for the reason that more of the "swell" of the line will be in use and not merely wound upon the reel. A short taper also works best against the wind for the same reason.

It should be obvious, although the fact has not been adequately emphasized by angling writers, that if the caster can as a rule (owing to the restricted nature of the stream, which may be small and with banks thickly wooded) use only the light tapered end of his line on a rod really adapted to the size of the swell of the line, he is working at a great disadvantage. For average small-stream fly casting it is best to select a line having a "quick" taper, fifteen feet or less.

The leaders furnished by the tackle dealers especially for dry-fly fishing are usually of very good quality—the best is none too good—with dropper loops, of course, and from six to nine feet in length. The angler who elects to tie his own leaders, a very simple matter and by far the better plan, should purchase the very best silk-worm gut for the purpose—round, hard and clear. It will be necessary to have gut of different weights or caliber from heavy to very fine, in order that the leader may be tapered from about the size of the end of the reel line to very fine undrawn gut nearest the fly. Drawn gut was at one time extensively used by dry-fly fishermen, but it is now generally recognized that fine undrawn gut is quite as efficient and the additional strength gained by its use is a distinct advantage.

The tapered leader certainly aids materially in fine work over clear, still water and shy fish. I believe it was Henry P. Wells, the author of "Fly-Rods and Fly Tackle," a work familiar to both American and English fly fishermen, who stated that in his opinion the most important factor for successful fly fishing was to make invisible any connection between the fly and the line, and the use of fine terminal tackle tends to bring this about. Moreover,

fine caliber gut near the fly assists in floating it. Better, straighter casting can be done when a tapered leader is used.

The proper length of leader varies with the immediate angling conditions. Under no circumstances, for practical fishing, should the leader exceed the rod in length—this entirely in the opinion of the writer, although concurred in by many other anglers. Under rough weather conditions a short leader works best. For long, fine casting a nine-foot leader should be used. For average dry-fly fishing on the general run of American trout streams, I believe a seven-foot leader to be the most practical and efficient.

As regards the color of leaders, the fact that any advantage is gained by the use of variously stained gut (with a view to making the leader invisible) has never been conclusively proved—natural or mist-color leaders answer every purpose.

For attaching eyed-hooks to the leader or snell there are several different knots; one of the best of these, and the simplest, is shown in Fig. 1. The gut must be rendered perfectly pliable by soaking in water before tying on the fly. Pass the end of the gut through the eye of the hook, bend it back and make a slip-

knot or half-hitch around the gut; draw the slip-knot nearly tight and slide it up to and over

Figure 1.

the eye of the hook, and pull tight. This forms a jam-knot easily upset but impossible to disengage by a straight pull. After making the knot, cut off the superfluous end of the gut. For cutting off gut ends after changing flies at the stream-side nothing is handier to carry or use than an ordinary fingernail clip.

In Fig. 2 is shown the method of knotting together two strands of gut in tying a leader or making repairs in one. The two half-hitches should be pulled perfectly tight and then drawn together.

Figure 2.

For attaching the leader to the line use the jam-knot shown in Fig. 3.

Figure 3.

If you wish to attach a dropper fly to a dry-

fly leader without loops use the method shown in Fig. 4, attaching at a point where two strands are knotted together.

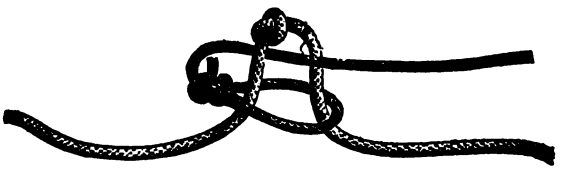

Figure 4.

So many intricate details are connected with the subject of artificial flies, and with dry or floating flies particularly, that in order to reduce the discussion of the matter herein to a not inordinate length many points must of necessity be merely touched upon.

In later chapters, the efficiency of various patterns, as well as how and when to use them, will be discussed; at this point we are concerned chiefly with the purely material details of the "floater."

The construction of the dry fly differs considerably from that of the wet, but as this is a matter pertaining rather to the art of the fly dresser the subject need not be considered as imperatively within the province of the present discussion. It has previously been noted that at present the larger part of the dry flies obtainable in this country are imported from

England. The tendency of the tackle dealers is to furnish comparatively few of the familiar American patterns tied dry.

The dry fly is, of course, dressed with the purpose of causing it to float as well as may be, and this is effected—although the method of construction varies to some extent with various patterns—by dressing the fly with double or "split" wings tied at right angles to the body (called "erect" wings) and with the hackling arranged to stand out well from the shank of the hook. The body of the fly is dressed very lightly and in some instances is of cork, straw or quill.

In the case of some of the latest patterns horsehair is used for the body material. As a rule dry flies are dressed upon small hooks, number twelve and smaller, and the hooks are of light wire. A list of floating flies which have been found effective on American trout streams is given in a later paragraph.

Almost without exception floating flies are dressed on eyed hooks; that is, without gut snells whipped to the shank of the hook, following the time-honored American custom, but with an eye or ring at the end of the shank by means of which the fly is attached directly to the leader. If space permitted the practical

advantages of the eyed hook could very well be emphasized in detail; at present I can only urge every fly fisherman to adopt the use of the eyed fly for either dry or wet fly-fishing. If for no other reason than that of economy, the use of the eyed hook justifies itself: the feelings of the angler, who when looking over and testing his tackle for the approaching trout season pulls the snells without difficulty out of an even two dozen of the old-style trout flies which have never even been once used, are best left to the imagination.

Eyed hooks are made in two styles, with turned-up and turned-down eye; that is, in the case of the turned-down eye the eye is on the under side of the hook shank or bent toward the barb of the hook, the opposite being true of the other form. Much controversy has taken place regarding the respective merits of the two styles of eyed hooks, various authorities enthusiastically and convincingly championing either one or the other. It would seem that each form has its virtues and is quite satisfactory. Undoubtedly the reader, impartially experimenting with both styles, will soon discover which is best—for him. The greater part of the floating flies which come to this country are dressed on turned-up eyed hooks.

As to the form of the hook, whether Sproat, Pennell (turned-down), O'Shaughnessy, Sneck, and so on, it is a matter in which one cannot exercise personal choice to any great extent—one must needs be contented with the flies as he finds them. Hooks with the Sneck bend are favored for the smaller patterns; others may be dressed on any of the above-named hooks. Unless you are willing, many times, to undergo great delay in stocking your fly box, you must sacrifice a personal prejudice toward any particular form of hook for the sake of obtaining the pattern you wish in the desired size.

I give below a list of a few floating flies which I know to be successful under average angling conditions, and would suggest that in making your selection of dry flies you obtain some, at least, of the patterns dressed upon number ten hooks. The use of the very small English patterns, tied, as a rule, on number twelve hooks at the largest, is not at all times and in all places most advantageous on American trout streams. The flies named are, as far as may be, typical; that is, selected with a view to approximately imitating the general insect life (consisting largely of water-bred insects) of any trout stream, so that the angler may as a general thing find in his list a fairly close

imitation of most of the natural flies, any one of which may be temporarily abundant on the water, and upon which there is reason to believe the fish are feeding.

The list is as follows: Coachman, Cahill, gold-ribbed hare's ear, Wickham's fancy, brown sedge, silver sedge, iron blue dun, whirling blue dun, and olive dun. These should be dressed upon hooks, numbers twelve and ten. It is seldom necessary to use smaller than a number twelve dry-fly, although, of course, occasionally only the very smallest flies are effective. To the flies named should be added the green May female, brown May female, and spent gnat female, of the new series of floating flies developed by Mr. F. M. Halford.

Of the above the coachman, Wickham's fancy, gold-ribbed hare's ear and Cahill are frankly "fancy" flies, not intended to represent any particular natural fly. The Wickham's fancy, coachman and gold-ribbed hare's ear are wonderfully successful patterns, as a rule, throughout the entire season, and under a great variety of angling conditions. The Cahill is a fly of very delicate coloration and dressing and is particularly useful over very low and clear water. The duns, olive, whirling blue and iron blue are dressed in imitation

of various ephemera in the sub-imago or dun stage, and when the fish are feeding upon the natural fly these are apt to prove exceedingly successful.

The green and brown May fly patterns are representative of the corresponding Ephemeridæ, and their usefulness upon streams when and where the May fly is abundant is sufficiently obvious. The Caddis flies in the nomenclature of the dry fly are known as "sedges"; the silver sedge and brown sedge belong to this class. The spent gnat pattern represents the female May fly which, having voided her eggs upon the water, thereafter falls upon the surface of the stream practically lifeless and with wings flat and outstretched. The spent gnat, accordingly, is dressed with horizontal, not erect, wings.

For carrying eyed-flies various fly-boxes are furnished by the tackle dealers. The method of holding the flies is usually by means of a metal clip, although some boxes have several small compartments with transparent (celluloid) covers, and others have cork strips into which the fly may be fastened. The last sort is the least satisfactory. As a rule, in the ordinary form of eyed fly box the metal clips are set very closely together, and it is

advisable to procure a box capable of holding at least double the number of flies you intend to carry, so that they may be inserted without crushing and be easily distinguished and removed.

Paraffin oil, or some one of the other similar waterproofing liquids furnished by the tackle dealers, is a necessity to the dry-fly caster. A floating fly, if perfectly dry, will float fairly well for a number of casts without the use of paraffin; but it soon becomes drowned and sodden and very difficult to dry out by merely false casting. Whatever preparation may be used (and I have found very little practical difference in them) it should be carried in a small bottle having a stopper with brush attached. Apply the oil to the fly lightly, and remove the superfluous liquid by pressing the fly between folds in your handkerchief. It is usually practicable to prepare a number of flies in this way before going to the stream, thus obviating the the necessity of carrying the "oiler."

It would seem unnecessary to consider the matter of the creel, waders and other general fly-fishing equipment, as these are familiar to every fly-fisherman of any experience. However, for the benefit of the virtual beginner it may be said that a rather larger basket than

that usually advised to the trout-fisherman say a creel of twenty-pound size—is preferable for many reasons. The new style sling, which suspends the basket from the left shoulder, should be used.

Waders, of course, are necessary. Whether wading pants, wading stockings, or ordinary sporting rubber boots are worn is more or less a personal matter generally dependent upon the conditions under which the fishing will be done. The wading stockings, worn with woolen socks and hobnailed wading shoes, are as a rule the most satisfactory equipment. A leader-box in which extra leaders may be carried between pads of dampened felt and a landing net are other requisites.

CHAPTER IV

How to Cast the Floating Fly

THE sportsman who has fished only with the wet fly may rest assured that should he take up dry fly fishing he will discover a renewed interest in the sport of fly fishing for trout, which, perhaps, through custom, may have lost something of its former charm. Moreover, in dry fly fishing he will find a sport of such wide scope that, it is safe to say, he will never consider himself other than a beginner in the art. For the scientifically inclined sportsman—the man who chronically seeks to know the "reason why"—it is difficult to name any outdoor recreation which would prove more to his liking or more worthy of serious research and study in its various branches, particularly that dealing with the entomology of the trout stream.

In photographic work most people are perfectly willing to "follow the directions," trusting that the results will be good enough, and caring little for intimate knowedge of the

scientific details of the various processes which produce the completed photograph. This, certainly, is not at all the state of mind with which to take up dry fly fishing, or, for that matter, angling of any sort. In fact, the dry fly man should be a student of causes as well as of effects, for the simple reason that only in comparatively rare instances can the desired effect be produced unless the angler knows the underlying cause and proceeds to utilize it practically. This is particularly true of the selection and manipulation of the floating fly and, in a lesser but quite considerable degree, of casting the fly.

Almost every book on angling contains a more or less understandable treatise on fly-casting, and it is only for the benefit of the virtual beginner at fly-fishing for trout, and further with a view to completeness and the emphasizing of certain points which even the old hand is prone to forget or possibly neglect through carelessness that the following brief explanation is incorporated here. Casting the floating fly differs little essentially from the manner of casting the sunken fly; in detail, however, the difference is very great.

Casting the floating fly divides naturally into two quite distinct phases; first, the actual cast

which places the fly, cocked and floating, upon the surface of the stream; second, the subsequent manipulation of the fly in such a manner that its action approximates with all possible fidelity the action of the natural fly—the fly must float in the exact manner of the natural fly under like circumstances. Granting judicious selection of the fly in the first instance and some skill and finesse in placing it, it is with the correct action of the fly—after all the most important thing in the whole art of dry fly fishing —that the sportsman has chiefly to deal, and the dealing is not always of the easiest.

It should go without saying that properly and effectively to cast and fish the floating fly it is essential that the tackle be correctly assembled. In this regard I believe the point most in need of emphasis is the question of the right way to fit the reel to the rod; that this should be done so that the reel is underneath the rod with its handle to the right (in the case of the right-handed caster) is in my experience the only satisfactory and thoroughly efficient way. With the reel thus placed it is never necessary, when playing a fish, to turn the rod over so that the reel is above, as in the case when the reel is fitted to the rod with the handle to the left. After a fish is struck, if it be-

comes necessary to use the reel, the rod is simply shifted to the left hand—without the awkward necessity of turning it over to bring the reel on top—and the fingers of the right hand fall naturally upon the handle of the reel.

Of the English books on the subject of dry fly fishing I have seen only those of Mr. Halford. In "Dry Fly Fishing," by this author, the cut illustrating the proper grip of the rod shows the reel rigged underneath the rod with its handle to the left, and this is the method advised by the author. It may be said with certainty that this manner of assembling rod and reel is not sanctioned by the majority of American fly-fishermen.

The manner of casting a fly is best described by an explanation of the overhead cast—the typical cast although by no means the one exclusively used in fly fishing, and in dry fly fishing, for reasons stated below, a cast which is used only when the horizontal cast is for any reason rendered difficult. Having assembled rod, reel, line, leader, and fly, using the knots shown in Chapter III., and taking pains to see that the leader before bending on the fly and attaching to the line has been previously well-softened by soaking in the leader-box, proceed to make the overhead cast as follows.

In the case of the beginner at fly-casting, the first practice casting may best be done casting downstream as the current will help to straighten out the line and leader. Two distinct motions constitute the complete overhead cast; first the back cast which throws the line behind the caster, then the forward cast which returns it in the desired direction. Fifteen or twenty feet is enough line to use for the first practice casting. The right hand should grip the rod firmly with the thumb extended along the upper surface of the handgrasp—this is the only proper grip of the rod and is a distinct factor for accuracy in placing the fly and also tends to make the caster use his wrist.

Good casting results only from utilizing the elasticity of the rod; the casting power of the rod is brought into play in one way only—by using the wrist in casting. Keep the elbow low.

In the back cast swing the rod smartly up to a position but slightly beyond the vertical and inclined a little toward the right so that the line when passing to the rear, or returning, will not tend to strike the rod. In the back cast throw the line up in order that there may be no possibility of its falling upon the water behind you—a high back cast is very essential.

Lift the line from the water quickly and neatly. Care must be taken not to carry the rod too far back—only a little beyond the perpendicular —as this will invitably result in loss of control over the line.

Instantaneous photography has conclusively proved the fallacy of the orthodox advice of the older school of angling writers, to "wait for the line to straighten out behind you" before starting the forward cast. This fact was noted sometime ago in a short paper in one of the outdoor periodicals and the writer at once proceeded to verify it—since which time I have often seen in print the old, familiar warning to the novice stated above. However, it is now generally recognized by well-informed anglers that when casting any fair length of line there is a considerable loop of line and leader which straightens out only after the forward cast has been started; that, in fact, the right time to begin the forward motion of the rod is when the line first begins to pull noticeably on the tip of the rod—a psychological moment soon readily recognized after a little practice. To avoid weakening the leader by whipping, or in rare instances snapping off the fly, the forward cast should not be started too forcefully.

Start the forward motion of the rod, then,

when the line, having passed to the rear, begins to pull back on the rod-tip, and carry the rod forward and down with increasing speed, stopping it when it is a little beyond parallel with the water. Before beginning another back cast be careful to reel or strip in any slack line. The beginner should concentrate on casting accurately and delicately; ability to cover average fishing distances is soon gained without much conscious effort to that end. As for accuracy, the dry fly man cannot possibly overrate its importance or more profitably seek to perfect himself in any other branch of the sport. Particularly when casting to a rising fish, other things being equal, everything depends upon accuracy.

At this point it seems best to note the matter of the use of the left hand in fly-casting for the purpose of controlling the rendition and retrieve of the line while casting, playing a trout, or floating a dry fly. In brief, the caster should control the line, practically at all times, by holding it in his left hand, as it comes from the reel, stripping in the line through the guides of the rod when it should be shortened, or allowing it to run out through the fingers when a longer line is needed in casting or when giving line to a hooked fish.

It should be understood that the left hand,

when used in this manner, need not be held in an awkward position, that is, close up to the reel, but may be held in a natural way at about the waist-line; it is simply a matter of the length of the loop of line drawn out by the left hand between the reel and the first guide of the rod. When this loop for any reason becomes so long that there may be a possibility of fouling it may be taken care of by shifting the rod to the left hand, clipping the line to the handgrasp of the rod beneath the fingers of the left hand, and winding up the superfluous slack line.

The beginner should accustom himself to handling the line in this way when first learning the use of the fly-rod; later it will be all the more difficult to master since at the same time he will be under the necessity of correcting other casting habits which may have become almost second nature. Further reference to this manner of manipulating the line—a most important factor in effective fly casting and fishing—will be found in connection with various subjects such as playing and landing a trout, methods of preventing drag, and so on; in fact, in one way or another the method is essentially a part of practically every phase of the purely manual side of dry or wet fly fishing.

It has been noted above that the overhead

cast, although the typical cast and the one, by the way, with which the greatest accuracy and distance may be attained, is less used in dry fly fishing than the horizontal; in the latter the rod, in the back and forward casts, moves in a plane about parallel with the water. The reason for this preference is a very real and practical one although difficult to explain in detail; the fact of the matter is, however, that the horizontal cast is far more apt to cock the fly—to place it upon the surface of the stream with its wings upright and not floating on its side—than is the overhead.

The reader should carefully note the above point and, wherever it may be possible, always employ the horizontal cast. It would not do to say that every trout would refuse to rise to the fly when floating down on its side—although I have seen a statement made to that effect; but with shy fish the probability of a rise to the correctly cocked and floating fly is greater than to the fly coming down upset. Apart from the known advantage of the horizontal cast cocking the fly is a matter quite beyond the caster's control.

Where there is smoothly flowing water with little chance of drag, and little if any wind, if the fly is cast with some skill it will float properly with wings upright more often than

not. If the horizontal cast cannot be used, owing to the conformation of the banks or other reasons, the caster in employing the overhead cast should direct his fly at an imaginary point in the air some two or three feet directly above the spot where he intends to place the fly; the greater delicacy in delivering the fly resulting from this will tend to multiply the chances of cocking the fly.

As I have said, the horizontal cast is made by swinging the rod, in the back and forward casts, in a plane parallel with, or slightly above, the water. The back of the caster's hand should be turned toward the water, the fingers uppermost. The attempt to cast too long a line, or the slightest delay in starting the forward cast, will cause the fly to fall upon the water behind you—a thing to be religiously avoided.

The above includes the essential details of the first phase of casting the dry fly—the actual cast which places the fly, cocked and floating, upon the water over a trout which has been seen to rise or where the angler may have reason to believe a fish is lying, the latter being more frequently the case upon American streams. We come now to the second phase of dry fly casting, the subsequent manipulation of

the fly in such a manner that it simulates as accurately as possible the action of the natural fly floating in a like position. The importance of simulating with all possible fidelity the action of the natural insect has previously been emphasized; the subject is one of very broad application, but at present we may note merely the necessity of upstream casting.

I believe that printed briefs for or against up or down stream fishing with the fly are wearisome to the average well-read and experienced angler; wherefore brevity in discussing this point seems advisable. As regards wet fly fishing any broad-minded angler willingly concedes that under certain conditions it is best to fish the stream up and under other conditions to fish down. The dry fly man, however, has no option in the matter; regardless of all other factors for upstream fishing, the practical fact remains that the floating fly cannot be fished downstream for when thus cast it is drowned almost at once.

But even if this were not the case the application of the rule of exact imitation of nature upon which dry fly fishing is based would prove the method of casting downstream and pulling the fly up against the trend of the current wholly wrong. Even the wet fly should never

be fished in this way. Parenthetically, the present writer has always recognized a distinction between fishing downstream and casting downstream; the progress of the angler may be with the direction of the current—always most advantageous upon the swift and rocky mountain trout stream—while the actual casting may be cross-current, a very effective way of fishing the wet fly under normal conditions, or upstream and slightly across if desirable. When upon the water the natural insect floats downstream as the current directs it; wherefore, as invariably as may be, the dry fly caster should cast upstream, allowing the fly to float down toward him without restraint from the line, following the natural trend of the current.

Leaving aside for later discussion the matter of drag, a state of affairs wherein the artificial fly tends to travel at an unnatural rate due to conflicting currents in the stream which affect line and fly differently, and also passing over for the moment certain other points more or less intimately connected with the advisability of upstream casting, there remains for present consideration the matter of false casting, or drying the fly.

As a rule, when casting a fair amount of

line, the fly will be quite free from moisture—if previously well-waterproofed—when the angler has again lengthened out his line after having made a cast and allowed the fly to float down over the water he desired to cover. Unless the fly has become thoroughly soaked four or five false casts are enough. These should be made as gently as possible to avoid whipping the fly; the constant casting tends to shred the wings, and if this results the fly loses much of its natural appearance and is more difficult to cock.

The longer the line used when drying the fly the longer distance the fly travels through the air; thus a lesser number of false casts are necessary to dry it. But it is better to take more time, use a shorter line and more casts, and endeavor not to whip the fly out of shape. After playing and landing a fish the fly will be thoroughly soaked and draggled. Ordinarily it is then best to put up a new fly; if this seems unnecessary, much of the water can be removed by holding the fly close to the mouth and blowing off the moisture, after which the wings should be nursed into their original form.

CHAPTER V

Where and When to Use the Floating Fly

BEFORE going further into the details of casting and fishing the dry fly it would be well to consider at some length the question of the best times and the most favorable places when and where the angler would be wise to depend solely upon the floater. That the fascination of dry fly fishing is such that many fly-fishermen elect to practice no other method under any and all conditions goes without saying, but the fact remains that under average American fly-fishing conditions the floating fly is sometimes at a disadvantage and the average American angler may well accept this fact with good grace, using the dry or sunken fly turn and turn about as the occasion determines. In this I do not wish to be understood as holding any brief for the wet as against the dry fly for any such reason as that "bigger bags" may at times be killed with the wet fly than with the dry—it is merely a ques-

tion of a few good fish taken by fair methods under the prevailing conditions. If these may be taken by dry fly casting, so much the better; if not, then assuredly the average angler, whose fishing trips are few and to whom a moderate success on the stream seems very desirable, may have recourse to the wet fly without losing caste. That, at times, nothing can be done fishing dry is a fact easily susceptible of proof.

Personally I have never so fully enjoyed fly-fishing as I have since taking up the dry fly, which I have now come to use almost exclusively and often when I know perfectly well that more success would attend the use of the sunken fly. This, however, I take to be a strictly personal matter; my fishing opportunities are many, and although I am on the stream a great deal (during the last ten years at the very least four days a week throughout the season) it is only infrequently that I go out with any great desire to "catch fish." To the general run of trout-fishermen, for the reasons stated above, I would not advise the exclusive use of the dry fly; if, on the other hand, the angler elects to practice this method to the exclusion of all others, that is his affair—and a matter for congratulation.

It would seem that the ideal conditions for the dry fly are somewhat as follows: A clear, smoothly flowing stream, whether fast or slow being immaterial if the surface is not too broken; the stage of water should be normal, although at the lower levels, as the season advances, everything is in favor of the dry as against the wet fly; finally, insect life should be fairly abundant on the stream and the trout feeding more or less at the surface on the natural fly.

In the early days of the season, when the stream is apt to be in flood and the water very cold and more or less discolored, the wet or sunken fly is plainly indicated. Until, with the progress of spring, air and water have grown warm, and the bright sunshine brings on the natural ephemeridae, the fish are usually ground-feeding, or feeding in mid-water, and will rise only infrequently to the fly fished upon the surface. At such times the fly caster who holds to the employment of the dry fly is doomed to disappointment.

In fact, it would seem that fly-fishing under these conditions should be done more along the lines of bass or salmon fly-fishing—not with the idea of simulating even approximately the natural insect food of the fish but rather with

the purpose of exciting the trout and inducing them to strike by the use of a glittering or highly colored fly which, fished considerably beneath the surface, arouses their curiosity or anger or may be taken for a small minnow. This style of fishing with the fly is distinctly on a lower level than the correct imitation of the natural floating insect by means of the dry fly; nevertheless, in fairness to the many fishermen whose days on the stream are rare and eagerly anticipated with attendant hopes of some practical success, I cannot but advise the use of the sunken fly under the conditions named or when, at any time during the season, somewhat similar conditions prevail.

In an average season the dry fly man may confidently expect success on suitable water from about the first of May to the last days of the open time. The trout streams are now clear and at or below the normal stage of water; the temperature of the water is rising steadily; the observant fly-fisherman will note the natural ephemeridae abundant at intervals over and on the stream—and there is no sight in nature (at least from the writer's viewpoint and, I fancy, from that of all other trout fly-fishermen) more interesting or more wonderful than a good hatch of duns. With

the advance of the season and the usual gradual falling of the water, conditions ever grow more and more in favor of the dry and against the wet fly.

I could easily cite numerous instances which have occurred in both my own experience and in that of other anglers which go to prove the effectiveness of the floating fly on low, clear water, late in the season, when the wet fly is usually ineffectual. Without, however, going into narrative detail, it should be sufficiently obvious that, under the conditions named, a very delicately dressed floating fly, in appearance quite similar to the natural ephemeridae common to the stream, attached to a practically invisible leader and riding down buoyantly on the surface, with wings erect, in the exact, jaunty manner of the natural dun, is far more apt to deceive the fish than two or more wet flies, shapeless and draggled, of dubious coloration, pulled across or against the current in a manner never followed by the natural insect. Wherever a fly may be floated the dry fly is distinctly the thing for late spring and summer fishing.

Much has been said and written concerning the character of the streams favorable for the employment of the dry fly—that is, as regards

the natural characteristics of the water itself, whether fast or slow in current, smooth or broken, shallow or deep, and so on. The dry fly having originated upon the placid currents of the south of England rivers, it is only natural that the impression should prevail that a floating fly can be used effectively only on a slow stream. The practice and experience of American fly-casters has thoroughly proved this an erroneous theory. It may be truthfully said that the dry fly may be successfully used upon all except white water.

It is not the rate of the current which determines the suitability of the floating fly to any given stream; wherever the surface of the water is unbroken the dry fly works well, but where white water prevails, although the angler may persist in the use of the dry fly, actual dry fly fishing is impossible, the fly can only be made to float for an infinitesimal length of time, is almost immediately drowned by a wave or drawn under by a whirlpool, and the result is a hybrid sort of angling in the nature of wet fly fishing with a dry fly.

The point has been made that even under these conditions it is best to use the dry fly on the ground that, dry or wet, the floating fly is materially, in form and coloration, a better

imitation of the natural fly than is the average wet fly. Under like circumstances the natural insect acts in a similar manner, that is, is drawn under the surface in broken water and carried here and there by conflicting currents. For some time it has been my custom to use dry flies for wet fly fishing, but I would emphasize the fact that fishing a drowned dry fly in white water is hardly genuine dry fly fishing and that any resultant success must be accredited to the wet fly method. Any statement to the effect that the dry fly may be used in the rapids of any trout stream where white water is the rule must be taken with a grain of salt and with due allowance for the enthusiasm of the man who makes it.

In any stream the swift runs where the water is smooth may be very effectively fished with the dry fly; taking an average of American trout streams, excepting the smaller rocky, mountain brooks (generally a succession of shallow, rough rapids with comparatively few smooth places) it may be said that a fly may be quite successfully floated over probably three-quarters of the water comprised. By smooth water I do not wish to be understood as meaning absolutely flat water—the floating fly will ride a wave or a succession of them

with surprising buoyancy; but if the crests of the waves are broken into miniature "white-caps" then the fly is soon drowned. The wet fly, or wet fly methods, should be followed wherever the water is of the latter description. The writer's own custom when fishing a stream wherein smooth and white water alternate constantly is to use a single dry fly, a coachman or Wickham's fancy, casting dry or wet as the nature of the stream may seem to render expedient.

In line with a general discussion of the times and localities when and where the dry fly is indicated it should possibly be noted that dry fly casting, as the more clever method and designed particularly for the purpose of angling for educated trout, should be favored over wet fly fishing on any stream which is whipped a great deal by wet fly fishermen. That the trout of such a stream grow "gut shy" and exceedingly canny and, at best, when the stream is clear and natural insect food somewhat abundant, rise reluctantly to the wet fly, is axiomatic. In view of the fine tackle, the finesse, and the fidelity to nature afforded by the dry fly method it would seem that no angler could for a moment doubt the efficacy of the floating fly under such circumstances. On the

other hand, I believe—although practical experimentation has never yet been possible—that a skilfully fished wet fly, on a stream where dry fly fishing has become the rule, might, on occasion, by the very novelty of the thing, be made to do wonders.

Finally, as regards the general question of when and where to use the dry fly, let me emphasize the fact that, for success, the sportsman must have confidence in the floater and use it constantly wherever he may consistently do so—that he must not consider his box of dry flies as merely supplementary to his familiar, old-time book of wet flies, but must give preference to the dry fly method, consider himself, in fact, a dry fly fisherman, and have recourse to the wet fly only when his common fishing sense advertises the fact that the floater is not the thing for the time being.

Sporadic experimentation with the dry fly when the wet has failed, although frequently successful in its purpose, is not a true test of the efficacy of the method when followed consistently, for the degree of true sport which the dry fly is capable of affording. Of all forms of angling, the phrase "it is not all of fishing to catch fish" is most true of fishing with the floating fly.

Coming now to the question of when and where to fish the floating fly on water evidently suitable therefor, in view of the fact that the American dry fly caster of necessity usually fishes the water rather than the rise, it is evident that the fly-fisherman must depend upon his knowledge of trout haunts and habits in the determination of this matter. Given a stream fairly abundantly stocked with trout, either *fontinalis,* the native speckled brook trout, *fario,* the brown trout, or with rainbows, where the most, the best, or any trout will be found, is to a considerable extent a matter of time and temperature—notwithstanding which the careful angler, and in particular the dry fly fisherman, will proceed to fish all the water except such as may be known to be barren of trout.

In general, trout will be found at the head and foot of riffles and rapids; at the head and tail of pools; in the lee of rocks in swift runs; under shady, shelving banks and boulders and similar "hides"; particularly in warm weather, where small, cold, spring-fed brooks enter the trout stream; and anywhere where the set of the current, as in little bays and on the bends, is such as to collect insect food in quantity. Really the angler need only remember that trout require cold, moving, and aërated water, espe-

cially brook trout, and the same thing is true of brown trout in somewhat lesser degree.

To enlarge upon the matter further would be impracticable here. In point of fact, stream experience alone will enable the angler to spot confidently and with precision the places where a good trout may be lying. Each trout taken by an observant fly-fisherman adds to the angler's sum of knowledge regarding "where the trout hide"; it would seem that a mental picture of the place is retained subconsciously—the trend of the current, the character of the banks and stream-bed, and where, in relation to some prominent object, such as a large boulder or possibly a sunken log, the trout rose; all these and other details are noted and mentally recorded, and eventually the angler, by the correlation and association of these mental pictures, comes to recognize instantly, almost to a matter of inches, the places where a rise may be expected. That an experienced fly-fisherman can tell "almost to a matter of inches" where a trout will rise may seem, to the casual reader, to be putting it rather strongly. However, inquiry of some sportsman of many seasons' experience with the fly-rod will definitely settle the matter one way or another.

While, indeed, the character of American

trout streams is such as to definitely discourage fishing the rise purely, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the dry fly-angler, while fishing the water, should constantly be on the lookout for a rising trout. Time and time again, while fishing a good pool or run where the rise of a trout could be noted, the writer has spotted rising fish to his very practical advantage. In this regard it might be well to note the fact that a rising and feeding trout creates very little disturbance on the surface of the stream, and does not, in accordance with the popular idea, leap above the surface; sometimes there is a slight "plop," and at times a little spray thrown, but the fish very seldom shows itself, and twenty trout could rise within the vision of an inexperienced and inattentive angler without attracting his attention. Upon glassy, still pools the subsequent widening circle of ripples tells the plain story of a rise; in a current, however, the actual rise must be seen—and often is if you are looking for it.

CHAPTER VI

How to Fish the Floating Fly

PRESUMING that the angler has outfitted correctly and that he is a fly-caster of average ability, and further assuming that the stream he is on is at least fair dry fly water—which he will fish upstream manipulating the fly with whatever skill he may command with the purpose of imitating the action and appearance of the natural fly floating down on the surface—success, then, is predicated wholly (apart from the question of the right fly at the right time) upon the manner in which the fly is fished. Under this head—how to fish the floating fly—there are many points for consideration, of which not the least in importance is the matter of drag.

Drag occurs when the artificial fly travels at a rate different from that of the natural fly in the same position—either faster or slower or with a tendency to move across or contrary to the current. It is caused by conflicting currents which exert dissimilar forces upon fly and line.

The natural dun coming down without restraint, of course, from line or leader, is affected only by the current whereon it floats; the artificial fly, attached to line and leader, several feet of which must often lie upon the surface, is subject not only to the rate and direction of the current upon which it floats, but also—unless the angler so handles his tackle as to prevent it—to the force and direction of the currents which play upon the line and leader.

Thus, when the fly is so cast that it falls upon still or slow water while the line is allowed to rest upon swift water, the artificial fly will at once drag rapidly across or over the still place in an utterly unnatural manner. The natural fly would rest quietly upon such a place, or, if there were a slight current, float slowly downstream.

The foregoing is an extreme case, cited merely with the purpose of making clear exactly what is meant by the expression "drag." Ordinarily when drag occurs the conditions are rather more subtle and complicated than in the foregoing example. Conversely to the above, when the fly falls upon swift water and the line upon slow, the natural downstream course of the fly is retarded. Again it often happens that unless the sportsman notes clearly the trend of

the currents whereon fly and line will rest, he may cast a taut line over a place where the currents are actually moving in contrary directions, the fly may rest upon a "set-back" (a current moving upstream) while the line is carried downstream with the general trend of the stream, in which case, if the natural current is the stronger and a taut line is thrown, the fly will drag upstream in relation to the current whereon it floats, and across and generally quite contrary to the action of the natural insect in the same position.

In the matter of preventing drag I think that the one rule above all others for the sportsman to observe is this: Before making a cast—by all means before casting over a rising fish—study carefully the trend of the currents which may affect your line and fly. In other words, the best way to alleviate drag lies in the ounce of prevention which may be applied before the cast is made. It is generally possible to cast over any given place or over a rising trout from a number of different points; one of these will be found to offer the least chance of drag.

The necessity of obviating drag, so far as possible, arises from the fact that a shy trout, feeding on the natural ephemeridae, is not apt to rise to the imitation—however good—which

comes over it in an unusual way. A feeding trout, possibly rising from a fixed vantage point wherefrom it can easily see and capture the duns floating down on the surface within striking distance, will, as a rule, rise only to the artificial fly which floats in an exactly similar manner to that of the natural flies which come within its vision.

The novice should also bear this in mind and religiously observe it: Avoid any upward or backward motion of the rod at the instant when the fly falls upon the water or immediately thereafter. In line with this it may also be said that no matter how fast the current may be, the angler should never begin to strip in the line until the fly is well started on its downstream journey. The seasoned wet fly-fisherman, upon his initial attempts at casting the dry fly, will doubtless find that he has an habitual tendency to raise the point of the rod at the moment when the forward cast has been completed and the fly has just fallen upon the surface of the stream; if this is done, the fly is at once pulled under the surface—drowned—and the habit is one which must be constantly resisted.

The same may be said of the tendency to begin stripping in the line prematurely while it is

still taut; the slightest pull upon the line at this time is at once communicated to the fly and either drags or drowns it. The proper and strictly necessary procedure, then, for the dry fly-caster is this: At the completion of the forward cast hold the rod absolutely motionless for a moment until the fly, floating down, has created more or less slack line, in accordance with the character of the water over which the cast has been made; then slowly bring up the tip of the rod or carefully strip in the line, or both, bearing in mind that to float the fly successfully there must always be more or less slack line between rod-point and fly.

As above noted, the best way to prevent drag is to first study the nature of the water over which the cast is to be made, eventually casting from the stand which seems most favorable for the cast's coming off well. If, however, it is absolutely necessary to cast so that the fly will fall upon a slower current than will the line or upon a swifter run than will affect the line, the only remedy is to cast a slack line—the fly will then float for a greater or less distance without restraint. If the fly is cast upon a still or slow place while the line rests upon swift water, drag will not set up until the slack line has passed downstream and begins to pull upon the fly.

In the opposite instance, when the fly is on a swift run and the line in slow water, the cast being so made that the slack lies in the swifter current, the fly will float without drag until it has taken up the slack, when the line will retard it. How, when, and where drag will occur is not only a matter of the set and strength of the currents acting upon fly and line, but also dependent upon the point from which the angler casts in relation to the currents—obviously a matter which cannot be detailed in a manner to cover satisfactorily even a few of the situations where drag is likely to occur. The angler must practically solve each problem of this sort for himself, as it is presented in the course of the day's fishing. But in practically every case the slack-line cast, varied to suit the occasion, is the best way out of the difficulty.

The usual way in which the slack-line cast is made may be described as follows: The angler, in lengthening out his line, strips from the reel a number of feet more than will be necessary to reach the spot where he desires to place the fly; then, the line having been extended, in making the final forward cast the rod is momentarily but decidedly checked when half way, or possibly a little more, through the forward swing, with the result that the line is doubled

back upon itself and the fly settles down upon the surface at the end of a considerable loop of line and leader. The motion of the rod should be stopped only for an instant, and the rod should then be carried down to its usual position at the end of the forward cast, about parallel with the water. A variation of the above method of casting a slack line, one which the writer has found very useful at times, while essentially similar to the method described, differs somewhat in that a loop of slack line, drawn from the reel by the left hand while "lengthening-out," is prematurely released, when making the last forward cast, the result being that the extra line does not "shoot" out straight, but comes down curved and slack upon the surface. To make the slack-line cast and place the fly accurately—as when casting to a rising trout—is a matter of much practice, and, it may be admitted, sometimes equally a matter of much good luck.

Although the matter of striking a rising trout will be treated in a subsequent chapter, it should perhaps be noted here that the seasoned wet fly fisherman, accustomed to fishing a fairly taut line, will soon learn to strike his trout with the loose line most often used in dry fly casting with really fewer resultant misses than is the

average when using the sunken fly and a tight line fished downstream or partly down and across. That the average angler whose dry fly knowledge is confined wholly to a greater or lesser familiarity with the literature of the subject, seriously doubts his ability—or that of any man—to strike his fish successfully with a slack line is, I am sure, a fact; and this identical thing, possibly more than anything else, is responsible for the hesitancy with which the confirmed wet fly fisherman turns to the dry fly. In point of fact, the trick is soon picked up and the angler finds his percentage of trout well-hooked really larger than when wet fly fishing.

Two of the chief reasons for this are that the dry fly, being a very close imitation of the natural insect in appearance and (when properly fished) in action, is generally taken by the fish with far more confidence than is the wet fly; as a result fewer fish are merely foul-hooked by chance or simply pricked, and unless the fly is missed entirely—even the natural fly is missed at times—the trout is generally well-fastened. Also, inasmuch as the dry fly is fished upstream, and, as a rule, the angler is below the rising fish, the direction of the strike is toward the fish and not away from it, as is frequently the case when casting the wet

fly downstream. That the tendency toward establishing a satisfactory connection is greater in the first instance should be obvious. The angler has only to learn to disregard the slack loop in his line—which, of course, must never be allowed to get absolutely beyond control—and to strike with certainly no more force than he has been accustomed to use in wet fly fishing.

To recapitulate, before going on to discuss in a more general way the matter of fishing the floating fly, it would seem that the chief points for the dry fly-caster to observe are somewhat as follows: To use a single floating fly generally selected as to size and color with regard to the natural ephemeridae common on the stream at the time; to cast the fly upstream, allowing it to come down after the manner of the natural insect, favoring the horizontal cast to insure, as far as may be, cocking the fly; to avoid immediately raising the point of the rod or stripping in line at the finish of the forward cast, but to hold the rod motionless until the fly is well started on its downstream course; finally, to avoid drag by casting a slack line.

In general, dry fly-fishing as done in America naturally divides into fishing the water and fishing the rise. The dry fly caster when fish-

ing all the water should proceed much after the manner of the wet fly fisherman: the angler who has been accustomed to fish upstream with the wet fly need not alter his general methods in the least, save as regards floating the fly and avoiding drag. As a rule, it is best to follow or wade along the left bank, looking upstream, as this will give you an unobstructed right-handed horizontal cast.

As the dry fly man works upstream and the trout habitually lie facing the current, the careful and quiet angler seldom needs to cast a long line—provided, of course, he is casting practically straight up and actually stalking the fish from behind. But when casting diagonally up and across from either bank, in which manner it may happen that a great deal of the water may be most advantageously worked, the familiar fact that "keeping out of sight" is half the battle in trout-fishing must never be forgotten. This time-honored rule of the trout-fisherman is, it would seem, quite frequently neglected by even the most experienced anglers, its non-observance often constituting the "inexplicable" reason for failure when casting to a rising fish or when fishing a good pool.

It is always best to use the shortest line com-

patible with safety, constantly bearing in mind the well-known very acute vision of the trout. The chances of failing to hook a rising fish or of eventually losing a fish successfully fastened increase measurably with the length of line in use. Moreover, with a short line it is easier to prevent drag because there is less line upon the water. On windy days when the ordinarily smooth reaches are choppy, and always when fishing the swifter, broken runs, a thirty, even a twenty-five-foot cast is ample, if you are fishing nearly upstream and take pains to swing the rod low. On several occasions, having allowed my fly to float down very close to me in order to lift it from the water without wetting (if you lift your fly from the water when it is well away from you, the pull upon the submerged leader drags it under), I have had a rise less than five feet away.

But to successfully fish close-up, the angler's progress must be slow, careful, and quiet, and the rod must be kept down low. Overhead motion, more than anything else, alarms the fish. You have only to pass your hand over a can of fingerling trout fresh from the hatchery to verify this and to appreciate the instinctive alarm of trout at anything moving in the air above them. Avoid quick motions—in

fact, dry fly fishing is a game which simply cannot be successfully played in a hurry.

Not infrequently the downstream wet fly fisherman covers several miles of water in a day's fishing—I know, because I have done it innumerable times myself, and I do not say that there is not much charm, good exercise, and generally a few fish to be found in this sort of fishing. But anything of the kind is strictly incompatible with properly fishing the dry fly. The wet fly man who takes up the dry fly method should understand at the outset that the cast-once-and-walk-a-mile sort of fly-fishing is simply out of the question. If you know your stream, select a moderate reach of evidently good dry fly water, and fish it leisurely, deliberately, and searchingly.

Keep an eye out for rising fish, and observe closely the natural insects, if any, about and on the water. Cover all the water thoroughly, floating your fly not once but several times over the best places. If the water is equally good from bank to bank, let each cast be not more than two feet to the right of the preceding one, beginning under your own bank (generally the left facing upstream) and working across the stream. Then move up slowly and proceed to cover the unfished water above in a similar

manner. Pools should be fished in the same way—covered thoroughly from foot to head. The matter of the most likely places to look for trout has been discussed in a foregoing chapter and need not be reconsidered here. The suggestions to follow on casting to a rising fish will also be found to have a general application in many ways to fishing the water.

CHAPTER VII

How to Fish the Floating Fly
(*Continued*)

CASTING purely to the rise is the orthodox way of dry fly fishing on the English chalk streams; that this manner of fishing the floater is of necessity subordinated to fishing all the water on American streams has been mentioned heretofore. Save in extremely favorable localities where the conditions closely approximate those of the British streams, stalking the fish is practically love's labor lost. However, large, quiet pools may be fished in this way if the angler selects the most propitious time for rising trout—in the warm season a little before sundown and for some time thereafter. Extensive, quiet reaches where the fishing is open may also at times be resorted to with the idea of casting to the rise, and some fair sport obtained.

Regarding the sporting merits of the two methods, I personally am sure that if conditions allowed I would never cast a fly except to

a rising trout. The visible rise of a trout always appears in the nature of a challenge, and my inability to get away from a place where I positively know a good trout is located has frequently resulted in my return with a pretty light creel. When casting over a pool, no matter how good, while fishing all the water, lack of success eventually breeds a doubt as to the presence of a trout therein; anglers going before may have temporarily fished it out or for some other reason, the pool may be barren at the time.

But when casting over a rising trout everything is certain and well-defined. You know where the fish is located, or at least where he came up; you generally have a pretty fair idea of his size; if duly observant you can guess closely to what sort of natural fly the fish rose, everything is sure save the eventual capture of that particular trout. You are fairly certain that if the right fly is put over the fish in the right way success will follow. It is up to you.

To cast with some understanding to a rising trout, it is very necessary that the angler be somewhat familiar with the habits of the fish when feeding upon the floating insect and also be fairly conversant with the life histories of what may be termed the fishing flies. That

rises occur when the fish are not feeding, that sometimes the trout roll up to or leap above the surface, is well known to the experienced stream fisherman. With this feature of the matter we are not here concerned; the habit has been variously accounted for by anglers and icthyologists but the motive of the fish in thus acting is still debatable. However this may be, the angler may safely conclude that any visible rise—save generally a clear leap above the surface—is a rise to the natural fly by a feeding trout until the contrary may appear from the attendant circumstances.

It is with the *bona fide* rise of a trout to the floating natural fly that the dry fly caster is chiefly concerned. But in this connection it should be noted that the feeding of trout upon the natural insect is by no means confined to the time of the latter's appearance strictly on the surface. Of the water-bred insects the *Ephemeridae,* called "duns" when in the subimago state, occupy the place of greatest importance in the entomology of the dry fly fisherman. In a later chapter something is said of the commoner insect life of the stream; it should here be noted, however, that trout feed upon the *Ephemeridae,* for instance, at all stages of their existence.

From the eggs deposited upon or in the water by the adult insect, or "spinner," in due time the nymphs are hatched. Upon these the trout feed at times on the stream-bed and in the weeds, nosing upon the bottom and in the aquatic vegetation in somewhat the same way as the common sucker or the German carp go about their business of drawing sustenance from the muck and weeds of the stream-bed. This habit of the trout, when followed in shallow water, results in an occasional disturbance of the surface by the tails of the fish and is called "tailing" in the nomenclature of the English dry fly fisherman. In this connection it should be noted, however, that the nymphs of the *Ephemeridae* which burrow under rocks and in the stream-bed and there remain until about to assume the first winged, or dun, state are practically inaccessible to the fish, although doubtless taken at times. Tailing trout are usually feeding upon caddis and other larvae.

Subsequently the nymphs, having undergone certain physical changes while in the nymphal stage, are ready to rise to the surface, cast off the nymphal shuck or envelope, and emerge into the air in the first winged state (sub-imago) at which time, as noted, they are called duns.

During the rise of the nymphs to the surface, when about to assume the dun state, they are often taken by the trout with avidity, and frequently when the nymph has neared the surface a trout taking it will visibly disturb the surface or break water—again in dry fly parlance called "bulging."

Ground-feeding or tailing trout and trout feeding in mid-water upon nymphs floating up to the surface—bulging trout—are manifestly not genuinely rising fish. To consider briefly once more the life history of the *Ephemeridae*: when the "hatch" is on, the nymph upon reaching the surface splits open the nymphal envelope and at once takes wing as a dun—an ephemeral fly in the sub-imago or first winged state. When the duns are thus hatching the fly may float for some little distance while ridding itself of the nymphal envelope and drying its wings for flight; a rise to the fly at this time is a true rise. It would seem, however, from very close observation of the water during a good many plentiful hatches of duns, that only an occasional insect, as compared with the great numbers hatching, remains upon the water for any appreciable time while undergoing the metamorphosis from nymph to dun—the change is in most cases

practically instantaneous. You may select any certain area of water, when duns are emerging constantly from every part of a pool, and watch that certain area with the utmost intentness; the chances are you will not see a single fly actually upon the water although many do, indeed, emerge from the water under observation and fly away.

In "American Insects" Professor Vernon L. Kellogg, of Leland Stanford University, writes as follows: "At the end of the immature life the nymphs rise to the surface, and after floating there a short time suddenly split open the cuticle along the back and after hardly a second's pause expand the delicate wings and fly away. Some nymphs brought into the laboratory from a watering trough at Stanford University emerged one after the other from the aquarium with amazing quickness." This from an undoubted authority, with my own experience, comparatively short but to the same end, leads me to believe that rises to the duns on the surface at the time of metamorphosis from the nymph are certainly less frequent than commonly believed and implied by dry fly writers; the rise would have to come at such an acutely psychological instant

that the chances are altogether too many against it.

In fact it would seem that when the duns are hatching many, perhaps most, rises are to the floating nymph and not to the winged insect. Autopsy shows a marked preponderance of larvae and nymphae about to change to the winged state over winged insects in the stomachs of trout taken under natural conditions. Furthermore, I might quote Mr. Halford when, in discussing bulging trout, he says: "Fish, when feeding on larvae and nymphae, at times rise quietly, without moving about from place to place. It is almost impossible under these circumstances to distinguish the apparent from *bona fide* rises."

All of which does not militate in the least against the theory that the artificial fly should correspond with the natural; when a decided hatch is on the trout are fully aware of the nature of the prevalent fly and if feeding upon it are quite likely to notice no other either natural or artificial. But the theory does, indeed, explain some phases of dry fly fishing which otherwise are quite inexplicable; for instance, inability to induce a rise to the properly fished winged artificial when its corresponding

natural is hatching and "apparent" rises to it are evidently common. It seems fairly certain that at such times the fish are feeding exclusively on the floating nymphs, taking them on the surface in practically the same way as the winged dun is taken. Also fish thus feeding would hardly come within the technical definition of bulging trout as that term is generally understood.

Having assumed the first winged state, scientificially the sub-imago, the duns thereafter are upon the water more or less during its continuance, sometimes blown upon the water or descending to the surface without apparent reason, and the trout rise to and feed upon them when in the mood. In a short time the dun or sub-imago undergoes another metamorphosis to the imago or "spinner"—the adult insect. The male spinners are subsequently upon the water in a spent or practically lifeless condition following the completion of the act of coition. The latter takes place over the stream to which the female spinner then descends to void her eggs. This, with some species, is done upon the surface, the fly floating downstream the while eventually to rise again and fly, generally it would seem, upstream—unless the program is incontinently

halted by the accurate rise of a trout. The spent spinners ("spent gnats") also serve as food for the trout—the male when it has completed the act of procreation and falls to the stream, the female when all the eggs have been voided.

Excluding, then, bottom-feeding or tailing fish, also fish feeding upon nymphs either in mid-water or, as noted, practically upon the surface, the trout feed upon the *Ephemeridae* first as duns and subsequently when, as spinners, the female floats on the surface when voiding her eggs, and upon both males and females when spent. Before casting to a rising trout the angler should, as far as may be, determine the nature of the rise and the fly to which it was made. The question of the right fly having been decided, it remains only for the angler to put the fly over the fish in the right way.

When you see the rise of a presumably feeding trout, spot it carefully; that is, make very sure of the exact spot where the fish rose. Unless this is done it will be necessary to wait for another rise, which may never come, or to cast haphazardly over the approximate place, which usually results in failure. As a general rule the artificial must travel in practically the

same path as the natural fly if the trout is to rise to it.

Choose your place from which to cast over the trout with two things in mind—to avoid being seen by the fish, and to lessen the liability of drag. Keep low and cast not a foot more line than necessary.

Do not cast to the exact place of the rise; drop your fly some two or three feet above it so that the fly will float down over the place where the fish rose. Moreover, if possible, avoid throwing your leader over the fish—which will not occur unless you cast actually in line with it from below.

If the fish fails to rise let your fly float well below it before lifting it from the water—for which the reason should be obvious. My own experience leads me to believe that often a trout will rise only to a fly, natural or artificial, floating over a certain small area of the surface which sometimes the fish seems to have selected for the purpose of feeding; if the artificial fly fails to cover the exact spot to which the trout is rising it may be the fish will wholly disregard it. Frequently I have cast to a rising fish and failed through difficulties of drag —and poor casting—to get the fly over the right place in the right way until possibly the

fifteenth or twentieth cast, and in the meantime have seen the fish rise to the natural fly within six inches of the artificial. But when I have had the right fly and by dint of persistent casting have at last floated it over the exact spot —the "dead line" for the natural fly—the response has almost always been instantaneous and emphatic. So I would advise not letting up on a rising fish until you are sure that what may be termed the feeding zone of the trout—often very restricted—has been covered by your fly while cocked and floating in an absolutely natural way.

At the same time it is poor business to keep hammering away at a very particular fish for the simple reason that the more you cast to him the more shy and finicky he is apt to become—certainly if the casting is not done with the utmost possible skill and unobtrusiveness—and eventually you may set him down to stay. It is best to divide your attentions, fishing the water above or below, and returning from time to time to make some half-dozen casts over the reluctant one.

I believe it pays best when fishing all the water to use a fairly large fly—as dry flies go —say a fly dressed on a No. 10 long-shanked hook. I have had particularly good results

from the floaters tied on these long-shanked hooks and am of the opinion that for average dry fly fishing under American conditions, when fishing all the water, they are more successful than the orthodox patterns. This goes for the larger, deeper streams and, as noted, for fishing all the water. For small stream fishing smaller flies are preferable. So far as I know dry fly patterns on No. 10 long-shanked hooks are procurable only from William Mills & Son, New York.

But when casting to a rising trout, even if you cannot discern to what fly the fish is rising it is best to discard the fancy pattern—hare's ear, Wickham, or coachman, which are generally best to use when fishing all the water for general results—and to put up an imitation of some one of the duns, olive, iron blue, whirling blue, and so on, dressed on a No. 12 or 14 hook which best approximate in size the natural ephemera ordinarily prevalent on the trout streams. The common-sense of this should not need argument, and it is best to try the small dun before possibly setting down the fish with a fancy pattern.

From the above it could be gathered that one of the approximately exact imitations of the duns might be superior to a so-called fancy

pattern for steady fishing, fishing all the water; and, indeed, upon occasions, this is certainly the case. In the season of 1911 I was out one day with a wet fly fisherman on one of the smaller Berkshire streams, upon which occasion we took eight trout from a small pool at the foot of a falls. The wet fly man, who, by the way, has played the game some thirty-five years during which time he has learned some few things about it, took two fish with the coachman and then cast for fully half an hour without results. In the meantime I busied myself with the camera, by no means, however, failing to note several rises in various parts of the pool.

When the wet fly man had gone on about his nefarious business I rested the pool while putting up an olive dun dressed on a No. 14 hook. Shortly thereafter I had six good trout for my pains and a still greater respect for the great little dry fly—in addition to a good working "bulge" on the veteran. But below the pool I could do nothing with the little dun and I was eventually compelled to return to my favorite golden ribbed hare's ear with which I then killed several good fish.

For straightaway all-water fishing it would seem that a good fancy pattern, rather large,

ordinarily gives the best results, save over very clear or low water when everything depends upon refining the tackle. Moreover, when fishing the water it is distinctly easier to keep a comparatively large fly dry and floating—the very small patterns when in constant use soon become thoroughly soaked and difficult to float.

CHAPTER VIII

Insects of the Trout Stream

THE order *Ephemeridae* includes the natural insects most important to the dry fly-fisherman, the May flies and other day or ephemeral flies; of the life history of these insects a fairly complete sketch has been given in the preceding chapter. Of course the locality will determine in great measure the natural flies which the angler must approximate with his artificials, the duns having precedence practically everywhere, but the caddis flies, *Trichoptera,* are quite certain to be prevalent at times, and also the stone flies, *Plecoptera;* in addition there are many small two-winged insects, *Diptera,* which occasionally appear on the water. However, the strictly water-bred flies, such as the May flies and duns, caddis and stone flies, are practically the only ones with which the angler is intimately concerned.

The life histories of the caddis and stone flies, with which the writer does not feel suf-

ficiently familiar to warrant discussion, are very interestingly given by Prof. Vernon L. Kellogg in his book, to which I have previously alluded, "American Insects," a volume, by the way, invaluable to the tentative American dry fly fisherman. (Published by Henry Holt & Company, New York.)

"So it was that my first summer's camping and climbing in the Rockies acquired a special interest from the slight acquaintanceship I then made with a group of insects which, unfortunately, are so little known and studied in this country that the amateur has practically no written help at all to enable him to become acquainted with their various kinds. These insects are the caddis flies; not limited in their distribution by any means to the Rocky Mountains, but found all over the country where there are streams. But it is in mountain streams that the caddis flies become conspicuous by their own abundance and by the scarcity of other kinds of insects.

"In Europe the caddis flies have been pretty well studied and more than 500 kinds are known. In this country about 150 kinds have been determined, but these are only a fraction of the species which occur here. Popularly the adults are hardly known at all, the knowledge

of the group being almost restricted to the aquatic larvae, whose cleverly built protecting cases or houses made of sand, pebbles, or bits of wood held together with silken threads give the insects their common name, i. e., case or caddis worms.

"The cases are familiar objects in most clear streams and ponds. There is great variety in the materials used and in the size and shape of the cases, each kind of caddis worm having a particular and constant style of house-building. Grains of sand may be fastened together to form tiny, smooth-walled, symmetrical cornucopias, or small stones to form larger, rough-walled, irregular cylinders. Small bits of twigs or pine needles may be used; and these chips may be laid longitudinally or transversely and with projecting ends. Small snail-shells or bits of leaves and grass may serve for building materials.

While most of the cases are free and are carried about by the worm in its ramblings, some are fastened to the boulders or rock banks or bed of the stream. These fixed cases are usually composed of bits of stone or smooth pebbles irregularly tied together with silken threads. In all the cases silk spun by the caddis worm is used to tie or cement together the for-

eign building materials, and often a complete inner silken lining is made.

"The larvae within the cases are worm- or caterpillar-like, with head and thorax usually brown and horny-walled, while the rest of the body is soft and whitish. The head with the mouth-parts, and the thorax with the long strong legs, are the only parts of the body that project from the protecting case, and hence need to be specially hardened. At the posterior tip of the abdomen is a pair of strong hooks pointing outward. These hooks can be fastened into the sides of the case and thus hold the larva safely in its house. . . . The caddis worm crawls slowly about searching for food, which consists of vegetable matter. Those larvae which have fixed cases have to leave it in search of food. Some of them make occasional foraging expeditions to considerable distances from home. Others have the interesting habit of spinning nearby a tiny net fastened and stretched in such a way that its broad shallow mouth is directed upstream, so that the current may bring into it the small aquatic creatures which serve these caddis-fishermen as food. The caddis flies live several months, and according to Howard some pass the winter in the larval stage.

"When the caddis worms are ready to transform they withdraw wholly into the case and close the opening with a loose wall of stones or chips and silk. This wall keeps out enemies, but always admits the water which is necessary for respiration. . . . When ready to issue the pupa usually comes out from the submerged case, crawls up on some support above water and there moults, the winged imago soon flying away. Some kinds, however, emerge from the water. Comstock observed the pupa of one of the net-building kinds to swim to the surface of the water. . . . The instant the creature was free from the water the wings expanded to their full size and it flew away several feet. . . . The time required for the insect to expand its wings and take its first flight was scarcely more than one second; certainly less than two. As such caddis flies normally emerge from rapidly flowing streams which dash over rocks, it is evident that if much time were required for the wings to become fit for use, as is the case with most other insects, the wave succeeding that which swept one from the water would sweep it back again and destroy it.

"The adult caddis flies . . . are mostly obscurely colored, rather small moth-like

creatures, that limit their flying to short, uncertain excursions along the stream or pond shore, and spend long hours of resting in the close foliage of the bank. . . They probably do not live long."

Of the stone flies Prof. Kellogg writes as follows:

"On the under side of the same stones in the brook 'riffles' where the May fly nymphs may be found, one can almost certainly find the very similar nymphs of the stone flies, an order of insects called *Plecoptera*. More flattened and usually darker, or tiger-striped with black and white, the stone fly nymphs live side by side with the young May flies. But they are only to be certainly distinguished from them by careful examination. . . The feet of the stone flies have two claws, while those of the young May flies have but one. The stone fly nymph has a pair of large compound eyes, as well as three small simple eyes, strong jaws for biting and chewing (perhaps for chewing her nearest neighbors, the soft-bodied smaller May fly nymphs), and two slender backward-projecting processes on the tip of the abdomen. The legs are usually fringed with hairs, which makes them good swimming as well as running organs.

The nymphs can run swiftly, and quickly conceal themselves when disturbed.

"All stone fly nymphs, as far as known, require well aërated water; they cannot live in stagnant pools or foul streams. . . It is perfectly certain that the nymphs serve as food for fishes. . . The eggs, of which 5000 or 6000 may be deposited by a single female, are probably dropped on the surface of the water, and sink to the bottom after being, however, well distributed by the current. Sometimes the eggs are carried about for a while by the female, enclosed in a capsule attached to the abdomen. The young moult several times in their growth, but probably not nearly as many times as is common among May flies. When ready for the final moulting the nymph crawls out on a rock or on a tree-root or trunk on the bank, and splitting its cuticle along the back, issues as a winged adult. The cast exuviae are common objects along swift brooks.

"The adults vary much in size and color, the smallest being less than one-fifth of an inch long, while the largest reach a length of two inches. Some are pale green, some grayish, others brownish to black. There are four rather large membranous, many-veined wings without pattern, the hind wings being larger

than the front ones. When at rest, the fore wings lie flat on the back, covering the much-folded hind wings.

"About 100 species of stone flies are known in North America. The adults are to be found flying over or near streams, though sometimes straying far away. They rest on trees and bushes along the banks. The green ones usually keep to the green foliage, while the dark ones perch on the trunks and branches."

This list of floating flies given in Chapter III., comprising the Coachman, Cahill, gold-ribbed hare's ear, Wickham's fancy, brown sedge, silver sedge (or Beaverkill), iron blue dun, whirling blue dun, green May female, brown May female, and spent gnat female, will be found as a rule quite sufficient (if the angler is stocked with a fair variety of sizes) to enable the sportsman to match with adequate fidelity any natural fly which may be temporarily prevalent on the water.

In the matter of the selection of fly, with regard to the theories of the "colorists," "formalists," and other sects of the dry fly, much might be written, but, it would seem, matters of this sort are rather out of place in a practical handbook for the mere beginner. If the angler will follow the few simple suggestions

made in the preceding pages, constantly holding to the idea that the *natural action* of the artificial fly is of first importance, he cannot go far wrong; and if, as a result of actual experience, he may wish to go deeper into the science of the dry fly, he will find the relation, theoretical and otherwise, of the artificial fly to the natural detailed at length in more ambitious treatises than the present.

It is very important that the angler use flies true to pattern, and as tackle dealers are prone to substitution, and furthermore as different fly-dressers frequently turn out quite dissimilar flies under the same name, the angler should make sure that the flies he may purchase are correct in coloration, size and shape.

STRIKING A TROUT

In a previous chapter something has been said of the manner of striking a rising trout when employing the slack-line cast as a preventive against drag. Other things being equal, success hinges upon the angler's ability to strike at the right time and with correct force—or lack of force. When fishing downstream with the wet fly, which the fish often takes beneath the surface, quick striking, at the

first suggestion of the strike of the trout, is at a premium; it would seem that when casting the dry fly the strike should be timed just a bit slower in the majority of instances, although when floating the fly down a swift run one can hardly strike too promptly.

To avoid drowning the fly when fishing "up" in a fair current the line must be stripped in gradually and with the greatest care; at the same time it is well to take up every inch possible that there may not be too much slack to straighten out in the event of a rise. Striking should be done from the wrist and with strict avoidance of anything like a sudden jerk which will almost surely snap the fine leader if a heavy fish has taken the fly or possibly tear out the hook if the fish is hooked lightly; the motion should be smooth, swift and even, and it must cease at once when the barb has gone home.

PLAYING A TROUT

As a rule when fishing with the dry fly the fish will be upstream from the angler when hooked. If possible keep him there. In the majority of instances the trout will bore upstream, or angle upstream to one side or the

other, and will not turn and run down with the current unless roughly and carelessly handled. Nurse the fish along, exerting a constant but not too heavy strain, so that he will continue to fight upstream against the current, thus tiring more quickly; in other words, "play it safe." If by any chance the fish gets below you, "takes the bit in his teeth" and runs with the current, go with him. Wade if you can, but if this is impossible get out of the stream as quickly as you can and follow down along the bank. As soon as possible get the fish upstream from you again.

Never try to net a fish which is downstream from you; get below him and let the current float him over the net—not away from it.

With regard to tackle handling while playing a trout, I might abbreviate here from an article which I contributed to *The Outing Magazine* for July, 1911, as further experience has served only to strengthen my belief in the methods set forth therein. That skilled tackle handling, after the rise, is at a premium in trout fly-fishing is due not only to the delicacy of the tackle ordinarily employed, particularly the very small hooks and often fragile leaders, but to the distinctly game qualities of the brook trout itself and the usually difficult angling con-

ditions afforded by its habitat. There is all the difference in the world between playing a fish in still and fast water, and the brook trout is essentially a fast water fish.

The way you will play a trout depends in great measure upon how your tackle is rigged. If you have assembled rod, reel and line correctly, the chances are that you will soon discover and adopt the best method of handling a hooked trout; on the other hand, if your tackle is improperly adjusted, it will be physically impossible for you to go after your trout the right way. The necessity of saying something about how to adjust your rod, reel and line is apparent.

In his book "The Theory and Practice of Dry Fly Fishing," Mr. F. M. Halford advises a method of assembling rod and reel which is directly contrary to the usage and advice of most seasoned American fly-fishermen. Briefly, his advice is to have the reel on the under side of the rod with the handle to the left, presuming that the angler casts with the right hand. When a trout is hooked the rod is passed to the left hand, turned over so the reel is on top, and the fish is then played directly from the reel.

In view of the fact that Mr. Halford is a

universally acknowledged authority in fly-fishing matters, it would, indeed, be presumptuous in me to say that this method of handling a hooked trout and of assembling rod and reel is all wrong, were it not that, as I am quite sure, the majority of experienced American fly-casters so regard it. The practice of most expert fly-casters in this country is to adjust the reel underneath the rod, but, in contradistinction to the method above described, with the handle of the reel to the right. Thus, when a fish is hooked, it is not necessary to turn the rod over when it is passed from the right to the left hand, but the reel is retained underneath the rod at all times, the very best position for it, for several reasons, for the business of fly-fishing. Moreover, the best way to play a trout is distinctly not from the reel. It is taken for granted in the above discussion, and also in the following, that the fly-caster uses a single-action reel.

I believe implicitly that the best way to handle a hooked trout, the one sooner or later adopted by most anglers who do much fly-fishing, is as follows: Having, as above noted, your reel underneath the rod with the handle to the right, maintain at all times, both when casting the flies and playing a fish, a loop of line of convenient

length between the reel and the first guide of the rod. This loop of line is controlled by the left hand, allowing the line to run out through the guides or, when necessary, drawing it back. Use the reel only when the loop of line grows so long that, when you are wading the stream, there is danger of fouling the line. When casting from a boat or canoe there is little chance of fouling the line no matter what the length of the loop may be if you take pains to lay down the line evenly on the bottom boards.

Now when you hook a trout you do not, at this very critical point, have to pass the rod from the right to the left hand and, what is worse, turn the rod over so that the reel will be on top. On the contrary, you "stand pat," as it were, still keeping the rod in the right hand and, if the trout is a large one, yielding the line to him through the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, or, if the fish is a small one, gradually drawing in the line—and the trout—with the left hand without recourse to the reel. When stripping in the line, clip it to the handgrasp of the rod between the first and second fingers of the rod-hand.

If the trout is a fairly large one and is hooked in fast water it will often happen that his first run will exhaust the loop of free line. Then, when he stops running, pass the rod

from the right to the left hand—you do not have to turn it over because your reel handle is placed to the right—and play him from the reel until he gives in a little, when you at once return the rod to the right hand and strip in line with the left.

Playing a trout in this manner one is master of the situation at every stage of the game from the strike to the landing net; and if, at any time, some unusual action of the fish renders the outcome more than ordinarily doubtful, your chances are many times better for getting out of the difficulty than if you depend upon the reel for the intake of your line; for instance, every experienced trout fisherman knows that often a trout will run out many feet of line from the reel and then incontinently about-face and run in toward the angler—one of the most difficult situations the fly-caster is ordinarily called upon to face.

About nine times out of ten—at least it is not safe to rely upon odds more favorable although, of course, sometimes the fish will be so deeply hooked that the chance is lessened—a slack line spells a lost trout. The rapidity with which a fish coming directly toward the angler creates a wake of slack line is difficult to estimate; in any event, the fly-caster's single-action reel is utterly unable to cope with the situation

no matter how skilfully the angler may manipulate it.

The fly-caster who handles his fish as here indicated is of all anglers best armed against the running back of a hooked trout. Once you have reduced the action of stripping in the line with the left hand to a purely automatic motion, so that you perform it quickly, expertly, and without forethought in the matter of how to go about it, it is a very fast fish, indeed, which can accumulate much slack line, for the line may be retrieved through the guides far faster than with any sort of reel and almost always with sufficient rapidity to save the fish.

It seems, too—indeed, it is a fact—that when playing a trout in this manner one can usually tell what the fish is going to do before he does it, and the value of this forewarning should be obvious. Every slightest movement of the fish is carried to the left hand of the angler holding the line, and the least lessening or increase of tension between the rod-tip and the quarry is instantly sensed and line taken or given accordingly. Moreover, the method insures against forcing the fish too strenuously because one knows to a practical certainty when there is too much pull—a thing far more difficult to estimate when killing the fish on the reel.

A FINAL CAST

We have now considered more or less completely most of the matters with which the beginner at dry fly fishing should be familiar, namely, the correct tackle, how to cast, and where, when and how to fish the floating fly; also we have said something of the insect life of the trout stream and of the playing and landing of the fish when hooked. But we have almost entirely neglected any hint of the great fascination of fishing with the floating fly. It is the writer's earnest hope that these pages, which deal so exclusively with the practical side of the matter, may, nevertheless, lead the reader to the stream-side, fly-rod in hand, where, as he quietly follows the stream and his sport, it will presently appear that the matters upon which we have herein placed the most emphasis are, after all, rather unimportant—that the true reason for the dry fly may be found in the sunshine on the riffles, the cool lapping of the stream about a moss-grown boulder, in the quiet of a glassy pool where the duns dance and the peaceful pines are reflected clearly.

THE END